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Scottish Affairs Committee
By email

28 March 2024

Dear Pete

Thank you for inviting me to provide oral evidence on 11 March as part of your inquiry on intergovernmental relations. There were a number of points on which I agreed to write to the committee to provide further clarity.

At questions 323 and 324 Douglas Ross MP asked about the Government of Iceland's interest in the Scottish Government's expertise on renewables and onshore/offshore wind.

This relates to my attendance at the Arctic Circle Assembly in October 2022 where I discussed Scotland's enormous potential in this area with Icelandic Prime Minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir and Foreign Minister, Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir. We agreed to share expertise on renewables and climate change policy. Three months following this discussion, a parliamentary committee from Iceland visited Scotland to follow up on these discussions. Next month we host a visit from the Icelandic President, Guðni Thorlacius Jóhannesson. As I stated to the committee, I believe this is further positive evidence of the strong interest across Scotland's near northern neighbourhood of the value of this kind of proactive international knowledge exchange.

Mr Ross also asked about other examples of how we are engaging internationally to maximise this shared ambition. He is aware from comments made by the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy Mairi McAllan MSP that the Scottish Government, and Scotland generally is held in high esteem internationally on these issues. International interlocutors engage with us seeking knowledge exchange and information on issues such as our renewable abundance and our commitment to climate justice, tackling climate change, human rights and international co-operation. Examples include the £2 million Scotland pledged at COP26 for loss and damage, helping to break a 30-year impasse and galvanising more than \$700 million of funding, demonstrating what small countries can do when they apply themselves, and questioning at COP28 on how we managed to pioneer and take forward the world's largest floating offshore wind leasing round. We also used our

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co-chairmanship of the Under2 Coalition to set up policy forums on hydrogen and other issues - specifically to exchange knowledge and experience – underlining the Scottish Government's commitment to being a good global citizen and making a constructive contribution to tackling the climate crisis.

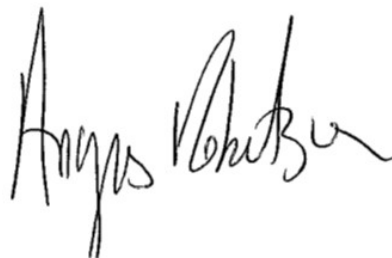
As I made clear during my discussions with the Committee, Scotland needs to continue to deepen ties with key partners to increase economic opportunities and build our excellent networks for both Scotland's benefit and that of our international partners.

If there is one point I would like to emphasise following this particular line of questioning, it is the crucial importance of the Scottish and UK Governments working together to support the development of a hydrogen economy in Scotland. In September the then Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy Neil Gray wrote to his UK Government counterpart Claire Coutinho, following her appointment as Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, emphasising the need for constructive close working between the UK and Scottish Governments, and seeking a meeting. Sadly, this correspondence was never followed up by her department. The importance of the issue was also raised by me when I met former Foreign Secretary James Cleverly. I had intended to follow up with his successor Lord Cameron, but our meeting was sadly cancelled by the FCDO, and no rescheduled meeting has been offered by the FCDO at the time of writing this letter.

Through our recently published International Strategy, we have outlined the Government's ambitious international objectives for the remainder of the Parliamentary term, setting out how our work overseas delivers for the people of Scotland. The Strategy focuses on three broad themes of the Economy, Trade and Investment; Climate Change, Biodiversity and Renewable Energy; and Reputation, Influence and Relationships. These are all themes upon which my fellow Ministers and I regularly engage with international colleagues and on which we will continue to seek constructive intergovernmental collaboration.

Finally, at question 334 officials agreed, in response to a question from Anum Qaisar MP, to provide details of the dates on which correspondence between the UK and Scottish Governments in respect of an IMA exclusion for glue traps was exchanged. The Minister for Green Skills, circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater wrote to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Barclay on 20 December 2023. This was not the first approach to the UK Government with the matter first being raised at Ministerial level at the EFRA IMG on 13 September last year following official level engagement on the topic in August 2023. We note that six months has now passed since this was first raised with UK Government Ministers with no decision communicated back, on a matter where there is no evidence of substantive market impact.

Yours sincerely



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