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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
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1 October 2024

Dear Edward,

INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS MEETING

This letter updates the Committee on the key points from the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) meeting held in person in London on 16 September 2024.

The meeting was the first IMG EFRA with the new UK Government and was hosted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State, acting as chair. I and Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, represented the Scottish Government.

The main items of discussion were in support of establishing a reset in intergovernmental relations. The group agreed new Terms of Reference, emphasizing the fundamental principle that collaborative working will be founded on maintaining positive and constructive relations, based on mutual respect for the responsibilities of the governments and their shared role in the governance of the UK. The group agreed to develop and implement a joint work programme for enhanced collaboration that takes a natural capital approach to enabling sustainable economic growth, reducing waste and pollution, protecting and restoring nature, improving food security and enhancing biosecurity across the UK. Other items included discussions on the UK's agriculture markets, including the importance of providing sufficient ring-fenced multi-annual funding for agriculture, rural and marine sectors across the UK, and an update from the Joint Nature and Conservation Committee on protecting and enhancing the UK's biodiversity. The group also agreed a schedule of meetings for 2024 and 2025 with the next meeting due to take place in November 2024.

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A read out of the meeting, summary of attendance and the new Terms of Reference are included in the attached communiqué that has been published on the UK Government website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inter-ministerial-group-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs-communicues/388a2890-4a7d-4879-b81a-db254c34cdd5>) and will be published on the Scottish Government website.

I hope that this summary is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

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