



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

Mairi Gougeon MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Scottish Government

**25 September 2024**

Dear Mairi,

Thank you for giving evidence on Wednesday 11 September regarding the Scottish Government's policy priorities and programme for government commitments within our remit. Please pass on the Committee's thanks to the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity for also attending this evidence session.

As you will recall, there were a number of points from our discussion where you committed to provide additional information to the Committee via follow-up correspondence. I note these points below:

1. In response to a question by Rhoda Grant MSP, you agreed to provide further information on discussions within the Scottish Government regarding the procurement of equipment for the Scottish Fire Service for the purpose of tackling wildfires<sup>i</sup>.
2. When discussing the issue of forestry, you agreed to follow-up with details of what safeguards are in place to protect public monies in this sector being used for unethical practices such as greenwashing<sup>ii</sup>.
3. In response to a question from Beatrice Wishart MSP, you agreed to provide an update on the programme of work being actioned around the production of fisheries management plans and the Joint Fisheries Statement<sup>iii</sup>.
4. You committed to provide further information about how the Marine Directorate manages Freedom of Information requests, and what its position is regarding the publication of data collected using public monies<sup>iv</sup>.
5. In response to a question from Rachael Hamilton MSP, you agreed to follow-up with figures describing how personnel numbers have changed since the Marine Scotland was renamed the Marine Directorate in 2023<sup>v</sup>.
6. You said you would keep the Committee informed on the Scottish Government's approach to cockling in the Solway Firth following the conclusion of a two-year research programme on the topic<sup>vi</sup>.
7. When discussing the issue of veterinary arrangements following Brexit, you agreed to furnish a copy of a Scottish Government publication setting out its expectations around a revised SPS agreement between the UK Government and the European Union<sup>vii</sup>.

Contact: Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.

Email: [rural.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:rural.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

8. You undertook to circulate details of NatureScot's approach to engagement with local communities relating to the designation of national parks<sup>viii</sup>.

In addition, the Committee would be grateful if you could provide answers to two further questions, which we did not get the chance to ask during our discussions.

9. Regarding proposals for streamlined investigation and enforcement of statutory conditions set out in the new crofting bill, the Committee is keen to know how the Scottish Government will ensure any revised complaints process will protect the anonymity of individuals reporting breaches of duty.
10. Following your attendance at the IMG meeting, the Committee would welcome an update on progress towards resolving outstanding issues relating to the implementation the border target operating model on the west coast of Scotland.

The Committee would appreciate a response to the above points by 23 October.

Yours sincerely,



**Finlay Carson MSP**  
**Convener**

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<sup>i</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), col 10.  
<sup>ii</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), cols 21-22.  
<sup>iii</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), cols 29-30.  
<sup>iv</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), cols 36-37.  
<sup>v</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), col 38.  
<sup>vi</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), col 40.  
<sup>vii</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), col 44.  
<sup>viii</sup> Rural Affairs and Islands Committee. [Official Report, 11 September 2024](#), col 45.