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Michelle Ballantyne MSP
Convener
Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

14th October 2020

Dear Michelle

COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UK GOVERNMENT

Your letter to me of 19 August referenced the Committee's inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's economy, workers and businesses and, in particular, the Committee's recent engagement with the UK Government on that topic. You noted that those exchanges have led the Committee to suggest that the Scottish and UK Governments and Parliaments (and potentially other devolved institutions in the UK) should develop 'a reciprocal protocol on the provision of information to committees'. I note that you have written separately to Alister Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland, to seek the views of the UK Government on this matter

I am very supportive of the Committee's intentions in this regard. I am firmly of the view that where the actions and policies of the UK Government impact on devolved interests that Parliament should be able to question UK Ministers. Indeed, the provisions in the current UK Internal Market Bill, if enacted in their present form, underline the need for the actions of the UK Government in devolved areas to be subject to thorough scrutiny by Holyrood.

I am therefore planning to write to the Secretary of State asking him to encourage his Ministerial colleagues to respond positively to future requests from Scottish Parliament committees, and also to offer to work with him on the development of protocol that would build on the current provisions set out in [Devolution Guidance Note 12: Attendance of UK Ministers and Officials at Committees of the Devolved Legislatures](#).

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As with your letter, I am copying this letter to Ken Macintosh, Presiding Officer, Bruce Crawford, Convener of the Finance and Constitution Committee and Christine Grahame, Deputy Presiding Officer, in her capacity of Chair of the Conveners Group.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Russell', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MICHAEL RUSSELL

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