Dear Michael,

FUTURE RELATIONSHIP NEGOTIATIONS

Despite the current public health emergency, the future relationship negotiations between the European Union and UK Government remain ongoing. The Committee is acutely aware that the deadline for any extension of the current transition period is 1 July 2020. The Committee intends to continue scrutinising the negotiations during this current period and we look forward to inviting you to give evidence to the Committee in the near future.

At the stage, and in recognition that the UK Government’s current position is that it does not intend to seek an extension to the transition period, there are a number of areas where the Committee would welcome an update, in writing, on the Scottish Government’s current assessment of the degree of progress in the negotiations. Firstly, the Scottish Government’s perspective on the UK Government’s position that it does not intend to seek an extension to the transition period. Secondly, what degree of involvement or discussion the Scottish Government has had to date with the UK Government with regard to the UK Government position in the negotiating rounds that have taken place to date. The Committee recognises that negotiating rounds that have taken place have dealt with devolved areas, such as fisheries.

Thirdly, the Committee recognises the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had upon the Scottish Government, however, the Committee would welcome an update on what contingency planning the Scottish Government is making for a No Deal outcome from the future relationship negotiations. The Committee would also welcome the Scottish Government’s perspective on the scope of any deal it considers to be achievable within the current timetable. Lastly, the Committee notes that the Specialised Committee on the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland is meeting today. I would welcome an update on what discussions the Scottish Government has had with regard to the deliberations of the Specialised Committee and the impact of the Protocol on Scotland and, in particular, the South West of Scotland.
I recognise the significant pressures that the current Covid-19 pandemic has created and therefore there is no deadline for a response to this letter although the Committee requests a response before you next give evidence to the Committee. Instead, my Clerks would be happy to discuss an appropriate timescale for a response with your officials if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Joan McAlpine MSP
Convener, Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee