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James Dornan MSP
Convener
Local Government and Communities Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Dear James

Ministerial Statement on Modifying Local Connection

I am writing to inform the Committee that the Scottish Government is currently unable to consult on the Ministerial Statement on local connection, as outlined at Action 33 of the Ending Homelessness Action Plan: Annual Report¹.

You may recall that, last November, the [Homelessness etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2003 \(Commencement No. 4\) Order 2019](#) commenced legislative changes for intentionality and local connection. This included a requirement that Scottish Ministers publish a statement, within 12 months (i.e. by 7 November 2020), on taking forward a new power to modify local connection. It also required that Ministers consult on the statement.

We had planned to launch the consultation in May but now intend to postpone this as we cannot consult with local authorities and homelessness organisations at a time when they, and the Scottish Government, are working hard, in extreme and challenging circumstances, to support the response to Covid-19.

A knock on effect of delaying the consultation is that we are unlikely to meet the the current legislative deadline to publish the Ministerial Statement, as set out in section 33B(1) of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#). For that reason, we are exploring options to seek provision, through further coronavirus legislation, to extend the deadline.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-action-plan-annual-report-parliament/pages/6/>

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This would allow us the flexibility to postpone the launch of the consultation until the organisations within the homelessness sector are able to participate. I can, however, reassure the Committee that it remains our intention to proceed with the consultation on a Ministerial Statement as soon as it is practical to do so.

I am sure the Committee will understand and agree why it is necessary, given these difficult and unpredictable circumstances, to take this action.

Kind regards

KEVIN STEWART

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