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Dear Kenneth,

With apologies for the delay in responding to your letter of 2 April 2015, I had hoped to be in a position to reflect on the UK Government's plans for a Spending Review before responding to your points of substance.

As the committee will be aware, I met the Chancellor on the 8 June and my officials have also engaged with HM Treasury officials to seek further information from the UK Government on their plans. However, a detailed timetable has yet to emerge. While the additional UK Budget scheduled for the 8 July 2015 might provide more detail, for the time being, we may reasonably assume that the UK Government will not publish its detailed departmental spending review plans until after House of Commons' Summer recess.

Assuming the UK Government adopt a similar timetable to that adopted in 2010, the outcome of the UK Spending Review, including Scottish aggregate spending figures, may not be announced until October 2015. It therefore seems increasingly unlikely that we will be able to publish our own Draft Budget by the 20 September as outlined in the Written Agreement.

While I agree with the principle of your proposed changes to the Budget process going forward, reflecting the increasing importance of devolved tax powers, I suggest that we may wish to reflect on the practicalities and timing of such proposals in light of any confirmation of the UK Government's plans given the likelihood of a compressed scrutiny process.

In the first instance, I propose that my officials liaise with the committee clerks following the Chancellor's July announcement with a view to developing a prudent and practical timetable for this year's Draft Budget process and any other issues relevant to the Written Agreement.

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**JOHN SWINNEY**