

Ministear airson na h-Arainneachd agus Atharrachadh Aimsir
Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Paul Wheelhouse BPA/MSP

F/T: 0845 774 1741

E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Rob Gibson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



8 December 2013

Dear Rob

Thank you for your letter of 27 November 2013 seeking an update on the Scottish Government's action to address crofting law issues raised during the Scottish Parliament's consideration of the Crofting (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill earlier this year which were outwith the scope of that Bill.

I remain committed to ensuring that the issues raised at the time of the Bill, and any others notified since, are addressed carefully, fairly and objectively and in consultation with key crofting stakeholders.

Since the last Crofting Bill was enacted on 31 July this year, my officials have been discussing with those involved in crofting, including the Crofting Law Group, the best way in which to address the issues raised. The Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Crofting has also been discussing this and my officials are in regular attendance to ensure that the Group is kept informed of progress.

In addition to this my officials have arranged a formal meeting with crofting stakeholders to discuss how to progress matters. Those invited include the Scottish Crofting Federation; the National Farmers Union Scotland; Scottish Land and Estates; the Crofting Commission; the Registers of Scotland; the Scottish Land Court; the Crofting Law Group; the Cross-Party Group on Crofting; crofting solicitors involved in the last Crofting Bill; and others. This meeting has been arranged for the afternoon of Thursday, 19 December in Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh.

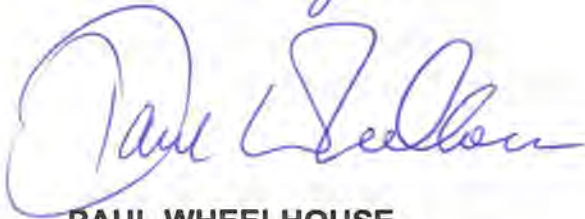
I am also aware of the Crofting Law Group's own consultation on crofting law, which is independent of the Scottish Government. My officials met with the Group prior to that consultation commencing and further discussion will take place during the planned meeting on 19 December to determine how the Group can continue to work with the Scottish Government and best contribute to the consideration process. It is understood that the Crofting Law Group's findings might be made available around Spring 2014 and these findings can be fed into the Scottish Government's considerations alongside other stakeholders' input.

I have asked my officials to keep me and the Cross-Party Group on Crofting informed of progress and, in turn, I will report to the Committee on the Scottish Government's intentions once our consideration of the issues raised is complete. I would, of course, want to ensure that full consideration is given to prioritisation of, and methods for dealing with, any issues to be addressed, including potential administrative and legislative options.

It is therefore too early to say with any certainty when the Scottish Government's considerations will be complete. However, as a rough indication, while next year will be a significant year for the whole of Scotland, I would hope to report to your Committee on progress by the end of 2014.

I hope this helpfully clarifies the progress already made and the work being undertaken by the Scottish Government on crofting legislation issues raised during the Crofting (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2013's Parliamentary consideration.

Kindest regards



PAUL WHEELHOUSE