

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Cùisean Dùthchail agus na h- Àrainneachd
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment
Ridseard Lochhead BPA
Richard Lochhead MSP

F/T: 0845 774 1741
E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Mr Rob Gibson MSP
c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



18 January 2016

Dear Rob

Thank you for your letter of 17 December regarding SSIs.

While there remains a significant amount of essential business that I require to take forward before Dissolution, I very much share the concerns of the Committee about the risks of over-burdening the Committee. I agree that the right balance must be struck to maximise transparency, stakeholder engagement and proper opportunities for scrutiny of the subordinate legislation programme.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business too has been active across all Committees in managing the Government's programme in ensuring that subordinate legislative business being taken forward in this period is prioritised and limited to that which is essential and strictly necessary. He gave evidence to DPLRC on 15 December recognising the pressures on Committees and the need to manage business in that way.

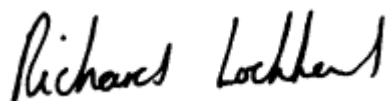
As far as RACCE and the work of my portfolio are concerned, I am aware that a significant share of upcoming work will fall to this Committee. In my area of responsibility, robust decisions have been made on what business is essential so as to ensure that we can meet deadlines and get instruments to the Committee as soon as we can and within Parliamentary deadlines, wherever possible.

In light of the points made by Committee, I can advise that 16 instruments originally set for pre-Dissolution consideration will be held over for consideration by the next Administration.

I will continue to apply that rigour in the weeks ahead, though of course the nature of the work of RA is such that in areas such as EU implementation, timings are not always within my control.

You ask also about quality control systems. These too are matters that the Minister for Parliamentary Business has been monitoring and reviewing (along with officials in SGLD and the Legal & Parliamentary Unit). Quality control improvements are always aimed for and, with increased pressures on all concerned in the pre-Dissolution period, these have been tightened further to minimise the risk of errors. As the Committee rightly recognise, it is highly undesirable and causes delays and uncertainties if errors arise. Taken in the round, our record on quality of subordinate legislation is good but we continue to aspire to improvements and having systems in place that can deliver high quality legislation.”

I hope this is helpful.



RICHARD LOCHHEAD