



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Devolution (Further Powers) Committee

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4 June 2015

Dear David,

Scotland Bill

I want to thank you for meeting my colleagues Linda Fabiani, Lewis Macdonald and myself, in Dover House on 19 June, so shortly after your recent appointment to the post of Secretary of State for Scotland. We found the meeting to be constructive and we appreciate the spirit with which you indicated your willingness to work with the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee in the months ahead. At the meeting, we highlighted the Committee's Interim Report and its conclusions and recommendations which were agreed unanimously on a cross-party basis.

At our Committee meeting today, the Committee considered the Scotland Bill. The purpose of our meeting was to consider the content of the Bill and the extent to which the UK Government has been able to amend the Bill in light of the conclusions and recommendations in our Interim Report. To assist us, we asked our officials to produce a comparator analysis paper, which I attach for your interest.

At the outset, the Committee welcomes the early publication of the Scotland Bill. Furthermore, whilst the Committee appreciates the improvements made to the Bill to date, we consider that the changes remain fairly limited whilst many of the recommendations contained in the Committee's Interim Report remain to be addressed. Accordingly, the Committee considers that whilst some progress has been made, the Scotland Bill does not meet, at this point, the spirit and substance of the Smith Commission's recommendations.

I trust that by providing you now with our analysis of where we stand, we will be able to work with you in the coming months to make improvements to the Bill in order to, at a minimum, bring it into line with the Smith Commission's report.

When we met in London you emphasised that there would be scope for further amendments to the Scotland Bill after its introduction in the House of Commons, whether by the UK Government or by other parties. As I am sure you will understand, it is essential that should my Committee, or the Scottish Parliament more generally, wish to pursue amendments to the Bill, that the timetable for consideration of the Scotland Bill at Westminster should facilitate this process. More generally, as I know you are aware, the timetable for the Scotland Bill will require to be aligned with the process for legislative consent within the Scottish Parliament as well as allowing for sufficient scrutiny of the Bill to be undertaken by the Scottish Parliament. I therefore look forward to receiving your assurances on the matter of the timetable and to discussing your plans with you. I would also appreciate if you could inform the Committee what amendments to the Bill you intend to bring forward at this stage.

In this regard, I understand that my Clerks have been in contact with your office inviting you to give evidence on your response to the Committee's report and the content of the Scotland Bill on Thursday 18 June. It would be extremely helpful to the Committee if we could have a detailed, written response to our report prior to your appearance before the Committee on 18 June, as well as further details of your expected timetable, stage-by-stage. We will be writing in similar terms to the Deputy First Minister.

Lastly, can I re-iterate how much I, and my fellow Committee members, appreciate the constructive spirit with you, and your officials, have engaged with the Committee to date and I look forward to continuing to working with you in this vein in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener