

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights
Alex Neil MSP

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Bruce Crawford
Convener Devolution (Further Powers) Committee
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The Scottish Parliament
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10 March 2015

Dear Bruce

I am writing to you in your role as Convener of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee to inform you that the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare which I co-chair with David Mundell is in operation. It is due to meet for the second time Wednesday 11 March. As you know, the Group was established by the First Minister and Prime Minister to take forward the devolution of welfare powers.

I know that your Committee has a keen interest in the welfare powers that are to be devolved. I am grateful for the work you have already done in hosting sessions on the Welfare clauses from the Smith Commission. That evidence will be invaluable in taking forward the work of the Group.

I'm committed to keeping you and your Committee apprised about the Group's progress. The Group's first meeting focussed on establishing the terms of reference and agreeing an outline of early priorities before the UK general election. Our second meeting is expected to discuss the Work Programme as well as Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments. I attach the terms of reference for the Group for information. You will note our intention to review the focus of the Group after the UK general election.

I will ensure that my officials keep your Committee Clerk up to date with developments. I am also happy to answer any wider queries that you may have on the Group.

I hope you find this helpful. I am copying this letter to Michael McMahon Convener of the Welfare Reform Committee for information.

ALEX NEIL



Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare

Purpose

The Joint Ministerial Working Group is established to provide a forum for discussion and decision-making to ensure the implementation of welfare-related aspects of the Smith Commission Report. The purpose and terms of reference for the group will be reviewed after the next UK Government election.

Membership

UK Government

David Mundell MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Scotland (Co-chair)

Priti Patel MP, Exchequer Secretary to HM Treasury

Lord Freud MP, Minister for Welfare Reform

Scottish Government

Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Co-chair)

John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and the Economy

Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills & Training.

Membership may vary, according to agenda items for each meeting.

Terms of Reference

- To promote the exchange of information required for the transfer of powers between relevant Government Departments
- To ensure a smooth transition of the new responsibilities to the Scottish Government and that they are delivered in a way that is coherent from the perspective of those who seek to benefit from them
- To discuss policy and operational practice in areas where responsibility is due to transfer, all in the context of respecting the principle of “no pre-emptive action.”
- To work cooperatively to deliver the transfer of powers in relation to the spirit of the Smith agreement and to ensure that the emerging Bill is fit for purpose
- To allow for open discussions that seek to provide a resolution of contentious and challenging issues

As far as possible discussions should be open, transparent and accessible with the aim of keeping stakeholders fully informed of progress (recognising the confidentiality of some aspects of the negotiations).