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Dear Kenneth,

I am writing to you and also to the Convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to alert your committees to the first meeting of the Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations [IMG] on 17 February. The meeting was convened by the UK Government in advance of the ninth meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee, held in Brussels on 21 February.

Unfortunately the preparations for this meeting were haphazard, with the date, timings, attendees and even agenda, repeatedly changed with little notice - with less than an hour's notice of the final arrangements. I am disappointed that, due to the exceptionally short notice provided to us of this meeting, it was not possible to provide you with advance notice or, indeed, for Welsh Ministers to attend.

The meeting was chaired by the Paymaster General Michael Ellis and attended by ministers from the UK Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive. An official from the Welsh Government attended.

I made clear the crucial Scottish interests at stake in the ongoing talks around the Northern Ireland Protocol and restated the Scottish Government's view that all successful applicants to EU Settlement Scheme should be granted settled status, and not merely pre-settled status which is the current position of the UK Government.

I also sought assurances that we would have more notice of subsequent IMG meetings.

**NEIL GRAY**

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