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Economy and Gaelic  
Leas Phrìomh Mhinistear agus Rùnaire a' Chaibineit  
airson Eaconamaidh agus Gàidhlig  
Kate Forbes MSP  
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24 March 2025

Dear Kenneth and Richard,

I am writing to provide an update on the Interministerial Standing Committee meeting which took place on 27 February and included discussion on the use of technology in public sector reform, which may be relevant to the current work of your respective committees. The meeting was chaired by the Northern Ireland Executive, in line with rotating chair agreements.

The other Ministers in attendance were:

- **From the Northern Ireland Executive:** Michelle O'Neill MLA (co-chair), First Minister; and Emma Little-Pengelly MLA, deputy First Minister (co-chair).
- **From the UK Government:** The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations; the Rt Hon Ian Murray MP, Secretary of State for Scotland; and Georgia Gould MP, Cabinet Office Parliamentary Secretary.
- **From the Welsh Government:** Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

The agenda covered: live issues including the Internal Market Act and the Sewel Convention; the use of technology in public sector reform; and an update on interministerial groups.

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On the topic of the Use of Technology in Public Service Reform, I highlighted encouraging examples of the ways digital innovation is improving public services in Scotland, including the introduction of digital dermatology and new Scottish Government Cloud Platforms which have been introduced. I emphasised that it is important to share approaches to avoid duplicating work and proposed that we consider joint working arrangements on this topic.

During the discussion of the Internal Market Act, I expressed the Scottish Government's dissatisfaction with the scope of the statutory review and the quality of the engagement undertaken by the Department of Business and Trade to date. I reiterated the Scottish Government's position that the Act be repealed and replaced with a more equitable and workable system.

I also noted that the Scottish Government is ready to assist with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding on the Sewel Convention, emphasising that the scope of the renewal should be done in collaboration and agreement with the devolved governments. I reflected on recent positive examples of the approach to legislative consent and was clear that this should be the consistent approach going forward.

Finally, I confirmed that the Scottish Government is content for officials to consider portfolio level working arrangements to ensure that interministerial engagement is operating effectively within the structures of the IGR Review.

The communiqué of the meeting has not yet been published, however I have asked my officials to make the committees aware when it is available.

I hope that this has been a useful update.

Yours sincerely,

**KATE FORBES**

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