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Mairi Gougeon MSP  
Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and  
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24 January 2021

Dear Dean,

## **INTER-MINISTERIAL GROUP FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (IMG EFRA) MEETING**

This letter updates the Committee on the key points from the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs meeting held on 6 December 2021.

The meeting was hosted by the Welsh Government via video conference with Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales, and Trefnydd acting as chair. Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Islands and Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity represented the Scottish Government.

The main items of discussion were single use plastics, climate adaptation and COP26 outcomes, winter preparedness, the UK Subsidy Bill, and an update on the Northern Ireland Protocol negotiations.

The group noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in January. A read out of the meeting and summary of attendance is included in the attached communiqué and has been published on the Scottish Government website.

We hope this summary is helpful.

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG

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Yours sincerely,

  
MAIRI GOUGEON

  
LORNA SLATER

## Communique

### Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA)

6 December 2021

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) met on Monday 6 December by video conference. The meeting was chaired by Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd.

The attending ministers were:

From the UK Government: Victoria Prentis MP, Minister for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Jo Churchill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; David TC Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales; Lord Malcom Offord, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland; Connor Burns MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.

From the Scottish Government: Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Islands; and Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy, and Biodiversity.

From the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd; and Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change.

From the Northern Ireland Executive: Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The meeting opened with a discussion on Single Use Plastics where Scottish Government Ministers presented their preferred approach to mitigate the environmental policy impact of the UK Internal Market Act (the Act) as raised by their Single-Use Plastics regulations. This included the option for as broad an exclusion as possible from the operation of the market access principles set out in the Act for policy areas under the Resources and Waste Common Framework, noting that they wanted to come to a workable solution for all administrations despite their continued and fundamental opposition to the Act. Welsh Ministers also favoured the broad solution approach.

Recognising the positive work undertaken at an official level, Ministers noted the various options considered through the Resources and Waste Common Framework to manage policy divergence in this area. Defra ministers said they wanted to examine all the potential options, including further collaboration that might avoid the need for an exclusion. In response to comments made in the discussion, Scottish Ministers repeated their concerns about the negative impacts of the Act on devolved competence. All ministers agreed to revisit the issue at the next meeting.

Ministers then discussed climate adaptation and reflected on the outcomes of COP26, such as the declaration on forests and land use and the Global Methane Pledge which the UK signed up to. Ministers agreed to continue to collaborate and share good practice across administrations on climate adaptation and for officials to identify further opportunities for collaboration.

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A discussion on Winter Preparedness followed. Ministers acknowledged the success of rapid response mitigations put in place in previous years and agreed to continue working together on data sharing and to resolve ongoing issues highlighted by the devolved administrations linked to labour and skills shortages, where possible.

The UK Subsidy Bill and its potential implications for devolved agricultural funding was also discussed.

An update from Defra on the Northern Ireland Protocol followed where the UK Government committed to keep all Ministers updated on the negotiations and to revisit at the January meeting.

Ministers then discussed the UK Seafood Fund whereby devolved administrations noted detail on the forthcoming infrastructure fund, and again stressed that it should respect devolved competencies.

Finally, the administrations discussed Common Frameworks; the UK Agriculture Partnership; and received an update on the annual fish negotiations.