

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Islands
Mairi Gougeon MSP
Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and
Biodiversity
Lorna Slater MSP



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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Committee for Net Zero, Energy and Transport,
Scottish Parliament
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13 February 2023

Dear Edward,

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 23 January 2022.

The meeting was hosted by the DAERA with UK DEFRA Minister Mark Spencer MP, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries 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 Retained EU Law, the Convention on Biological Diversity conference (CBD COP 15), and an update from the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group on issues affecting the agricultural sector over the last year. The group also received updates on a number of proposed animal welfare policy issues and the GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy.

The group noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in March 2023. A read out of the meeting and summary of attendance is included in the attached communiqué that has been published on the Scottish Government website.

We hope this summary is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MAIRI GOUGEON

LORNA SLATER

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Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) Communiqué: 23 January 2023

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) met on Monday 23 January 2023 by video conference.

The meeting was chaired by Minister Spencer, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries at Defra.

The attending ministers were:

- from the UK Government: Mark Spencer MP, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries; John Lamont MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland; James Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales and Steve Baker MP, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office.
- from the Welsh Government: Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd.
- from the Scottish Government: Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy, and Biodiversity.

In the absence of Northern Ireland ministers, Katrina Godfrey, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, attended on behalf of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

The meeting opened with a discussion on the Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill which, having come through the House of Commons largely unamended, will now enter the House of Lords. Significant work has been done to identify and categorise relevant legislation appropriately, and attention now turns to developing a program to give legislative effect to decisions made by each administration whether to retain, repeal or reform individual pieces of legislation. The devolved administrations continued to raise concerns around timescales, governance, consistency of engagement and resource burdens. Ministers agreed that ongoing close engagement through various official level channels should continue at pace to facilitate a ministerial decision on the way forward at the next IMG meeting.

The group then discussed the Convention on Biological Diversity conference (CBD COP 15), which was held in Montreal in December and was successful in achieving agreements on ambitious outcomes and targets, including to 'halt and reverse global biodiversity loss by 2030'; to protect 30% of global lands and oceans by 2030; and for strengthened mechanisms for planning, reporting and review. Ministers acknowledged the continuing success of the Edinburgh Process and agreed that they should continue working together to develop collaborative implementation plans to achieve these targets, while each progressing their own Biodiversity Plans and Strategies.

The group then received an update from the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG) on issues affecting the agricultural sector over the last year. Ministers agreed that 2022 had been a difficult year for the sector and that recent challenges showed no signs of dissipating. Ministers agreed that the sharing of data and information around different approaches to developing issues had been helpful for decision-making. They thanked the Group for their update and requested further periodic updates throughout the year.

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Devolved ministers then sought progress updates relating to the UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill; the Animal (Low Welfare Activities Abroad) Bill; joint working on certain on-going animal welfare issues; and the GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy.

Finally, the group agreed to continue dialogue and explore potential solutions with regards to the Offshore Wind Environment Improvement Package and End-of-Life Fishing Gear policy.