



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

Jamie Hepburn  
Minister for Parliamentary Business

**1 April 2025**

Dear Minister,

### **Scottish Government co-ordination of government business**

At the Convener's Group meeting on 27 November 2024, you spoke with conveners about various issues relating to committee business. At that meeting, I asked how the Scottish Government co-ordinates government business to ensure it is spread across the parliamentary session to avoid overloading committee work programmes, thus protecting effective parliamentary scrutiny.

My question was prompted by the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee's expected workload over autumn 2025, in anticipation of two government bills, two members' bills, pre-budget scrutiny, the secondary legislation implementing the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act 2024 – a substantial package of regulations to secure agricultural support post-EU exit – and a number of laid documents arising from framework legislation. The laid documents include the draft second islands plan, the draft first national good food nation plan and the draft climate change plan.

As you would expect, the Committee is unable to accommodate all this business in its work programme and has had to prioritise where it can. I know we aren't the only committee facing a heavy workload and having to make difficult choices about what items of business to prioritise – and de-prioritise.

In effect, this means it is unlikely that the Committee will be able to follow up on its scrutiny of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 by scrutinising the draft first national good food nation plan and its scrutiny of part 2 of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and its associated budget by scrutinising the draft second island plan. We recognise there is no possibility of delaying the draft first national good food nation plan as the timetable is set out in primary legislation.

Neither of these laid documents require parliamentary approval which enables us to take these decisions to manage our workload. At the same time, however, the lack of provision for parliamentary scrutiny and approval risks undermining the fundamental aims and objectives of these policy initiatives, as well as the parliamentary time taken to scrutinise and approve the framework legislation in the first place.

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Contact: Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email [rural.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:rural.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Members are disappointed not to have the opportunity to scrutinise the detail of these important policy documents given their potential to make a significant impact on people across Scotland. Members agreed, therefore, that I would write to you to highlight our strong concerns about how the amount, and timing, of government business is impacting on our ability to carry out effective parliamentary scrutiny.

Returning to the issue I raised with you at November's Conveners Group meeting, effective parliamentary scrutiny relies on the effective oversight and co-ordination of government bills, secondary legislation and laid documents.

I am copying this letter to the convener of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee in relation to its recent inquiry into framework legislation, the convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee in relation to its current inquiry into committee effectiveness and the convener of the Conveners' Group given its relevance generally to committee business.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Finlay Carson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Finlay Carson MSP**  
**Convener**