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Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener of the Finance and
Public Administration Committee

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Dear Kenneth,

11 February 2026

Thank you for your letter of 9 January, highlighting the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report on the cost-effectiveness of public inquiries.

The UK Government shares the Committee's commitment to increasing the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public inquiries, whilst retaining their inherent strengths, including their independence. While inquiries are essential for establishing truth and learning lessons, we recognise that their duration and cost can be significant. As such, we welcome the Committee's findings as a valuable contribution to the ongoing research and debate on inquiry reform.

The UK Government has taken steps to support the operation of inquiries and the implementation of inquiry recommendations. In 2025 the Cabinet Office established a publicly accessible tracker on GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-inquiries-recommendations-and-the-government-response, reporting progress on inquiry recommendations to aid scrutiny and transparency. In October 2025 the Ministerial Code was updated to require departments to consult a Cabinet Office minister before seeking the Prime Minister's agreement to establish an inquiry and define its Terms of Reference. This ensures that central expertise is utilised to keep inquiries focused and disciplined from the outset.

You may also be aware that the UK Parliament House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee is conducting an inquiry looking how Parliament should respond to calls for public inquiries and how to scrutinise the implementation of recommendations resulting from future inquiries. I welcome the Committee's focus on this important area, and look forward to seeing their conclusions.

The UK Government is continuing to explore whether there are changes that could enable inquiries to deliver outcomes and enable lessons to be learnt more swiftly and at lower cost. The Public Office (Accountability) Bill which also extends to Scotland, establishes a new duty of candour at inquiries, inquests and other investigations - backed by criminal sanctions. The duty will apply to statutory inquiries and coroner's investigations, strengthening and reinforcing existing powers to compel evidence. It will also apply at non-statutory inquiries, giving chairs formal powers for the first time. These changes have the potential to transform public inquiries, and we are working to consider how we can capitalise on the potential benefits and can share our further thoughts on this in due course.

We have noted the practical actions proposed within Scotland, particularly regarding the *Inquiries (Scotland) Rules 2007*. While the *Inquiries Act 2005* remains a reserved matter, there is significant merit in sharing best practice across our jurisdictions to ensure a consistent and effective approach.

Given the cross-border nature of many inquiries and shared ambitions, my officials would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Committee's clerks and Scottish Government counterparts. We are particularly interested in the Committee's insights regarding the proportionality of legal funding and the use of non-statutory investigatory models.

Thank you again for sharing the Committee's report. I look forward to further valuable correspondence on these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

**RT HON NICK THOMAS-SYMONDS MP
MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE
HIS MAJESTY'S PAYMASTER GENERAL**