

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands
Mairi Gougeon MSP
Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and
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18 January 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 5 December 2022.

The meeting was hosted by the UK Government with Lord Benyon, Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs at DEFRA 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, issues facing poultry supply chains, and the proposed Offshore Wind Environment Improvement Package. The group also received updates on the proposed Target Operating Model for UK Borders, and COP15 in Montreal.

The group noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in January 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: 5 December 2022

The Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA) met on Monday 5 December by video conference.

The meeting was chaired by Lord Benyon, Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs.

The attending ministers were:

- from the UK Government: Lord Benyon, Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs; John Lamont MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland; and James Davies MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales.
- from the Welsh Government: Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change.
- From the Scottish Government: Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, the 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 issues facing poultry supply chains. The sector has been affected by an increase in feed and energy prices, as well as Avian Influenza. Ministers agreed that there is a need to jointly monitor and share relevant data so that there is collective understanding of the issues and their impact. There will be an opportunity to discuss the state of the supply chain at future meetings and consider potential options for interventions to support the sector across the UK if necessary.

Ministers then discussed the Retained EU Law Bill which completed Committee Stage in the House of Commons at the end of November. Defra has identified a significant number of REUL regulations that fall within its remit and while there has been good engagement between respective policy teams there is a need to ensure that no policy areas are inadvertently overlooked. Devolved government ministers reiterated their concerns over the Bill and stressed the need to be kept informed of Defra's intentions. Ministers agreed that ongoing early engagement through various official level channels should continue.

The next agenda item discussed was the Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package. The primary purpose of the package is energy generation, seeking to deliver the British Energy Security Strategy commitment to accelerate offshore wind, one of the most ambitious projects of this nature anywhere. Devolved government ministers set out the importance of delivering the provisions in way that supports our shared offshore wind ambition whilst respecting devolution. Defra minister agreed that there is a need to work with devolved governments to make sure we can achieve our mutual objectives.

The Defra minister then provided an update on the border Target Operating Model. There has been good co-operation between Defra officials and counterparts from Scotland and Wales during the development of the new Target Operating Model but there are still areas of detail to be agreed in which the relevant Common Frameworks will play a key role. Ministers agreed

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that there would need to be continued close ministerial engagement on biosecurity measures, particularly at key decision points.

Finally, Ministers discussed the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity conference (CBD COP 15). Defra and the devolved governments have worked closely together and are aligned when it comes to the ambition. This includes an outcome to ‘halt and reverse global biodiversity loss by 2030’; a target for 30% of the global land and ocean to be protected by 2030; and for strengthened mechanisms for planning, reporting and review. Ministers agreed on the need to discuss the delivery of the UK’s biodiversity plans after the conference if we are to rise to this important challenge.

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