

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mr Ben Macpherson, MSP,
Convener, SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape
Review Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh,
EH99 1SP

Date 29/05/2025

Dear Convener

**SPCB SUPPORTED BODIES LANDSCAPE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING – 8TH MAY
– SCOTLAND’S COMMISSIONER LANDSCAPE**

Following my recent appearance at the SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee Meeting on 8th May, I advised I would respond to the points raised by Richard Leonard MSP regarding the Ministerial Control Framework (MCF). Mr Leonard asked at which point in the three stages, or “13 steps”, of the process the five proposed new public bodies I mentioned during the session were halted. As I mentioned at the meeting, some of those would not have been progressed for other reasons; I have provided explanations for each proposal below.

National Care Service Board

The work undertaken to consider the National Care Service Board being set up as a public body began prior to the introduction of the Ministerial Control Framework. However, in line with the MCF process, a business case was produced and prepared to be submitted to Cabinet. It was informed by the co-design work undertaken with people with lived experience of the Adult Health and Social Care system.

A wide range of views were expressed about the proposed National Care Service Board. COSLA ultimately withdrew from the proposed shared accountability agreement and withdrew support for the structural reform elements of the NCS Bill. As COSLA’s withdrawal of support came prior to Cabinet consideration of the business case (stage 3 of the MCF), Ministers decided to take time to reflect on those views and decide on the best way to achieve the change to the social care system that is so clearly needed.

On Thursday 23 January, the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd MSP, delivered a statement in Parliament outlining our revised proposals for the National Care Service, including the removal of Part 1 of the Bill. Consequently, the draft amendments to establish a National Care Service Board as a public body would not be lodged.

As an alternative, the government established an interim advisory board on a non-statutory basis and the interim National Care Service Advisory Board met for the first time on Wednesday 21st May. Membership includes people with lived experience of accessing care services, unpaid carers, those who work in the sector, care providers, the NHS, and local government.

Scottish Veterinary Service

The proposal to create a Scottish Veterinary Service (SVS) also pre-dates the MCF. However, using the Scottish Government's Public Bodies Support Unit guidance, the programme followed an approach of progressively narrowing the range of service delivery options for detailed consideration and appraisal. Extensive work was done to identify possible options.

The scoping work conducted supports the case for the creation of a Scottish Service that would deliver quality improvements and would be financially sustainable. However, in the current financial climate it is appropriate that we prioritise other key public services. The initial investment to create an SVS was deemed too high given the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Despite the business case not proposing the creation of a new public body, the work of the SVS was used to test the stages of the MCF process and was submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

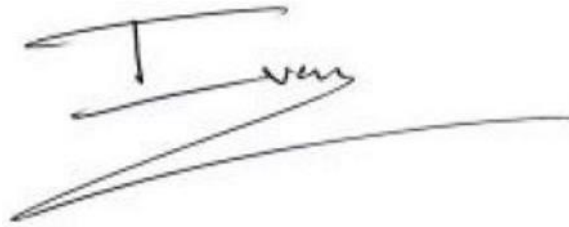
The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands announced in May 2024 that the Scottish Government will not be creating a new public body for SVS. However, the Scottish Government remains committed to the highest standards of animal health and welfare to Scotland, as well as more highly trained veterinary staff. The Scottish Government, with Food Standards Scotland, will now concentrate on working with the Animal and Plant Health Agency and local authorities to ensure that Scotland has the best possible animal health and welfare services.

Other Proposals

A further three possible new public bodies (Energy Agency, Food Agency, and NCS Commissioner) were considered. However, analysis concluded that under current financial constraints alternative service delivery options would provide greater value for money and be capable of delivering the intended functions effectively and efficiently. The MCF process was not applicable as the option to create these new public bodies was either not pursued or is still under consideration.

I hope this clarifies the points raised. However, please be assured of my continued support should any further clarification be required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink. It features a large, stylized 'I' with a horizontal bar extending to the right. Below the 'I', the word 'van' is written in a cursive script. A long, sweeping horizontal line underlines the entire signature.

Ivan McKee