



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Devolution (Further Powers) Committee

Mr David Melding AM
Chair
Constitutional and Legislative Affairs
Committee
National Assembly of Wales
Cardiff, CF99 1NA

c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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7 September, 2015

Dear Mr Melding,

Re. Parliamentary oversight and reporting of intergovernmental relations under the new provisions in the Scotland Bill

As you are aware, the UK Government's Scotland Bill is making progress in its passage through the UK Parliament. A significant component of the Bill involves the transfer of further financial powers and, for the first time, also certain welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament.

In doing so, this greatly increases the intergovernmental dialogue that will need to take place on such matters both as the Bill completes its passage – for example, through agreement to a new fiscal framework – and also in future years to take forward the new powers in a co-ordinated fashion with the UK Government. Such matters will also therefore have an impact I believe on how the other devolved nations interact with the UK Government. Indeed, this was an area specifically highlighted by Lord Smith of Kelvin in the Final Report of the Smith Commission as being in considerable need of reform and improvement.

The Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, which I chair, has been charged with scrutinising the Scotland Bill. In addition, we have been reviewing how the Scottish and UK Government will reach a bilateral agreement on future relations in tax and welfare and, more generally, how the reform of the quadrilateral structures of intergovernmental relations (IGR) across the UK is progressing through the review of the current review of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Joint Ministerial Committees being led by the UK Cabinet Office.

My Committee is very keen to contribute to the question of how the Scottish Parliament expects to have a degree of oversight of IGR in the future and how it can be appropriately informed of the major discussions between the two governments and any agreements being reached or disputes that require resolution.

At a recent discussion between Committee members, it was agreed that I should write to other committees in other legislatures across the UK that may share an interest as legislatures in this matter.

We are expecting to produce a report on this issue in October and would be pleased to send you a copy. This may in turn lead to the start of a dialogue between us on how we may all benefit from each other's experience in holding respective governments to account and in how we could share information on how parliaments may be best informed of future IGR in the shared space of devolution across the UK.

I would be interested in hearing from you as to whether this may be an area you would be happy to explore as a matter of common interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Crawford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'C' at the end.

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener