



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Rhoda Grant MSP
Highlands and Islands

Fergus Ewing MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 2DG

Our Ref: XPGC/KF/RG

Your Ref:

27 March 2017

Dear Fergus,

NFUS Secondment

I write to you as a co-convenor of the Cross Party Group on Crofting (CPGoC). At the recent meeting (15 March) of this group the subject of the secondment of NFUS senior policy officer, Jonny Hall, to the Scottish Government Brexit Hub, as an agricultural adviser, was raised. The group was informed that this was brought to you as a concern at the recent SCF annual Gathering in Applecross; and Andy Wightman MSP has also asked Parliamentary Questions on this subject.

Scottish Government officials at the CPGoC reiterated what you had said at the Gathering; that there is no preferential treatment of NFUS and that the same secondment arrangement could be open to any organisation interested, and having expertise in, agricultural policy. It was made clear that the Scottish Government does not pay anything towards Mr Hall's remuneration, that this is met in its entirety by NFUS. The question was asked if the Government would cover this cost for an organisation that would not be able to pay a policy officer itself – the answer being "definitely not".

This last point then raised the suggestion that there is a bias therefore, in that only an organisation with sufficient financial resources would be able to pay to have a policy officer seconded to the Scottish Government, and to have that opportunity to contribute directly to the formation of agricultural policy.

The CPGoC felt that this warranted a letter to you expressing its concern and asking you for comment regarding this apparent partiality.

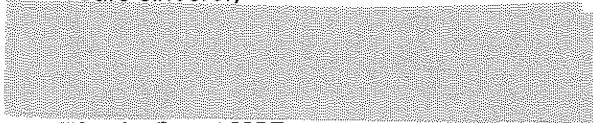
If you could let me have a reply before the next meeting on 25 April 2017, I would be very grateful.

With best wishes.

Rhoda Grant MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Highlands and Islands

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Yours sincerely



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