

Scottish Secretary outlines future of EU relationship

Speaking at the Committee he said:

“On 31 January, we delivered on the promise made to the British people nearly four years ago by finally leaving the EU.

“We have now left the EU as one United Kingdom and are free to determine our own future and form relationships with old allies and new friends around the world.

“The UK Government will negotiate these relationships on behalf of the United Kingdom, but we are clear that the devolved administrations should be closely involved in the process, both at Ministerial level for example via the Joint Ministerial Committee on European Negotiations, and via ongoing and constructive engagement between officials.

“As the Government has been clear, we want a relationship with the EU which is based on friendly cooperation between sovereign equals, and centred on free trade.

“We are not asking for a special, bespoke, or unique deal.

“We want a comprehensive free trade agreement similar to Canada’s, and in the very unlikely event the we do not succeed, our trade will be based on our existing Withdrawal Agreement deal with the EU.

On immigration he said:

“Our new points based immigration system will ensure the Scottish economy continues to gain access to the labour it requires, and will treat everybody based on their skills and contribution, not where they come from.

“This means it will get a lot easier for Scottish companies to recruit the labour they need from outside the EU/EEA, and a bit harder to recruit from within the EU/EEA.

“Douglas Ross and I have been talking to key Scottish stakeholders to understand and help those that might have genuine difficulties.

“The new system provides an opportunity for employers in Scotland to make the case for the inclusion of a range of roles, which up to now have been out of the scope of the visa regime.”