



HOUSE OF LORDS

Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee

House of Lords
London
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14 December 2021

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter of 1 December, and the enclosed correspondence with Mick Antoniw MS.

I am glad that our correspondence with Michael Gove MP was of interest to your Committee and that you also consider the points we raise of utmost importance. Our Committee are fully aware that scrutiny and engagement from all the legislatures on the Common Frameworks Programme are vital for its success. We therefore welcome your approach to scrutinising the Programme and that of the relevant subject committees in the Senedd.

We are also concerned about the tight deadline for scrutiny of frameworks and welcome your offer to continue interparliamentary cooperation. Our Committee, and indeed the Programme itself, have already benefitted from close interparliamentary cooperation with the relevant committees in the devolved legislatures. I know this has particularly been the case at official level, where committees have shared intelligence, conclusions and recommendations on frameworks, and also relevant correspondence such as this. I know this is continuing for new frameworks being shared and am assured that this will continue throughout the rest of our life as a Committee. I also look forward to engaging with you in any relevant discussions that may occur via a reconvened Interparliamentary Forum.

As requested, I am enclosing further correspondence we have had with Michael Gove MP. This includes his response to our original letter of the 27 October and a follow up letter we sent on the 30 November, to which we have not yet had a response, setting out the wider concerns we have on the Union more generally.

I am copying this letter to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for the Executive Office, the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, and the House of Commons' Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Andrews
Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee



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30 November 2021

Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 11 November.

We appreciate your reassurances regarding the importance of the Common Frameworks Programme. The update made to Neil's portfolio is certainly a positive step in the right direction. I would, however, like to reiterate that the Committee continue to be concerned that no thought appears to be being given to the future coordination of the programme. We note that you say it will be for individual departments to take forward the implementation of frameworks once the development phase is complete. As we made clear in our exchanges with the Minister on 13 October, central coordination from the Cabinet Office needs to be continued given the great uncertainty, and the fragmentation of the Programme in terms of standards, communications, engagement, effectiveness, and future parliamentary scrutiny. To be frank, steering from the centre will be imperative for determining the likelihood that the frameworks will be as effective as they need to be.

We also have wider concerns related to the relationships between the four countries generally. It has been evident in our scrutiny of the Programme that certain policy delivery bodies representing England have their role conflated with representing the UK. We noticed this most recently in our consideration of the Public Health framework, with regards to the UK Health Security Agency, the successor to Public Health England. We remain concerned that this elision between England and the UK may lead to further confusion and make it harder to distinguish which delivery bodies are accountable to which nation. We seek to raise this issue with you specifically, not only to ensure that when this does occur it be reconsidered within the frameworks programme, but in terms of the signal it sends to the Union more generally.

These are issues we look forward to pursuing with Neil on 11 January, and we will look forward to inviting you to join us later in the spring as we accelerate our ongoing inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Andrews
Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
*Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing
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Baroness Andrews
Chair, Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee
House of Lords
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Email: michael.gove@communities.gov.uk

11 November 2021

Dear Baroness Andrews,

Thank you for your letters of 27 October and for your interest and engagement with the UK Common Frameworks programme. We would like to thank the committee for your continued work to scrutinise individual Frameworks and the wider programme, and we welcome the debate that took place on 13 October in the House of Lords.

Thank you for your kind words regarding our recent Ministerial appointments at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). We would like to reassure the committee that DLUHC remains committed to delivering robust UK Common Frameworks. Neil, who has taken on responsibility for the Common Frameworks programme, looks forward to meeting with the committee in the near future and building on your existing positive working relationship with the UK Government. Officials are working with your clerks to find a suitable date. Furthermore, in line with your helpful feedback, we are updating the new department's gov.uk page to clarify the details of Neil's Common Frameworks portfolio.

The UK government intends to operate under the new ways of working set out in the Review of Intergovernmental Relations. These arrangements will strengthen the working of the Union through regular and formalised intergovernmental engagement, not least facilitating the smooth operation and continued momentum of the Common Frameworks programme. Since the debate, the second Intergovernmental Relations Quarterly Report, which Lord Dunlop referred to in the recent Common Frameworks 'take note' debate, has been published. The third report is anticipated for publication this Autumn.

UKG officials working on the UK Common Frameworks programme will continue to support UK departments throughout the development phases, working closely with the devolved administrations. Once the development phases of Frameworks are complete it will be for departments to take forward implementation.

We look forward to working with the committee on the UK Common Frameworks programme in the coming months.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities
and Minister for Intergovernmental
Relations**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N'.

**Neil O'Brien MP
Minister for Levelling Up,
the Union and Constitution**