



Huw Irranca-Davies MS
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Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru

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31 March 2022

Annwyl Huw,

Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement: Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee

Further to my letter of 18 March and your letter of 22 March ahead of the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on 23 March, I have issued a Written Ministerial Statement summarising the discussions at the meeting. It has been published at: [Written Statement: Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee \(IMSC\) \(31 March 2022\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Your letter was noted by the Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove MP. I also specifically drew the Chair's attention to the Committee's position on UK Bills and legislative consent.

In your letter you refer to the new machinery, including Inter-Ministerial Groups (IMGs), and UK Bills and legislative consent, and I address each point in turn below.

The UK Government's approach to the Professional Qualifications Bill does not respect the Sewel Convention and remains completely unjustified given the lack of exceptional circumstances involved. If trust is to be maintained between the UK Government and the other governments of the United Kingdom, it is essential the Sewel Convention is respected. The new intergovernmental processes have the potential to achieve significant and sorely needed improvements to the way in which the UK Government and the devolved governments work together. For us, the test will be whether the UK Government consistently follows the spirit and the substance of the reforms – based on respect, parity of participation and a desire to reach agreement through discussion, compromise and not imposition.

We share the Committee's disappointment over the short notice of the first UK-EU Relations IMG, and we expect future IMG meetings to be handled in a manner consistent with the IGR principles. The next IMG is expected to take place before the next meeting of the UK-EU

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

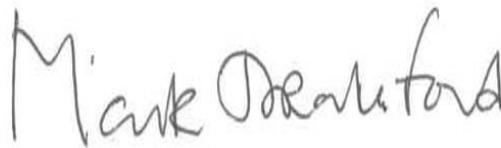
Partnership Council, for which there is currently no proposed date, but we will keep the Committee updated in line with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement.

The Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Bill is a telling example of the challenges posed by late sharing of provisions and information. This was a Bill where our policy objectives were aligned but insufficient time was available to discuss and agree upon the appropriate safeguards for devolution, resulting in the UK Government disapplying provisions in relation to Wales. I don't believe that the outcome here is fairly described as a breakdown in communications. Our policy position is clear. The UK Government was unwilling to provide the necessary assurances, and without those assurances, the Welsh Government was unwilling to be included in the Bill. We welcome UK Government's commitments for greater early engagement in the next Parliamentary session which, if respected, will ease pressures. We continue to press, however, for substantive discussions on our principles to UK Bills which would further assist with improving inter-governmental working.

Whilst these developments are indeed welcome, we remain of the view that placing the Sewel Convention on a statutory and justiciable footing remains the most appropriate way to protect the devolution settlement and safeguard the United Kingdom.

I am also copying this letter to Mick Antoniw MS, the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution; the Rt Hon Elin Jones MS, the Llywydd; the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations; the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for the Executive Office, the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, the House of Lords' Constitution Committee, and the House of Commons' Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD