



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**            **Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee (IMSC)**

**DATE**            **31 March 2022**

**BY**                **First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS**

The Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution and I represented the Welsh Government at the meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on 23 March, the first meeting since all governments agreed to use the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Review machinery as a basis for our intergovernmental relations earlier this year.

First Minister Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP and Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery John Swinney MSP joined on behalf of the Scottish Government. Rt Hon Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up chaired this virtual Standing Committee meeting, and he was accompanied by the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, and Minister of State for Northern Ireland. Senior officials from the Northern Ireland Civil Service attended as observers.

Among the items on the agenda were: the ongoing situation in Ukraine and the domestic implications for the UK; implementation of the new IGR arrangements; approach to UK legislation and future ways of working; and the implications of the Levelling Up White Paper. A communique was published following the meeting: [Interministerial Standing Committee Communiqué: 23 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/communique/interministerial-standing-committee-communique-23-march-2022)

The positive features of joint intergovernmental working in relation to the current Russia/Ukraine crisis, in particular resettlement of refugees arriving in the UK, were emphasised during the meeting. Alongside this, the Counsel General and I called for efforts to be made to improve the systems around visas, assistance with reaching destinations, and data flows. I welcome the fact that a specific request I made to the UK Government in the meeting to improve data sharing has since been addressed. More broadly, in the context of the economic consequences of the situation in Ukraine, I called for IGR fora to focus on the how it is exacerbating the increasing cost of living crisis being experienced in the UK.

Concerning the agenda item on UK legislation and legislative consent, the Counsel General and I highlighted the unacceptable and increasing breaches of the Sewel Convention. I drew the Chair's attention to a recent letter from the Chair of the LJC Committee on the use

of UK legislation. I also encouraged serious consideration of the House of Lords Constitution Committee's report and recommendations on the Convention. Linked to this, we called for codification of the Sewel Convention, and a strengthening of reporting mechanisms to respective Parliaments. In the near term, the Counsel General underlined the importance of early engagement on future UK Bills. Officials have been asked to follow this up and work on principles to minimise, if not eliminate, differences in approach.

Within the item discussing the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda, I reminded the Chair of the conclusions of the Dunlop Review, specifically: *"funding by the UK government in devolved areas must not replace core funding and must be applied with the support of the devolved governments"*. In relation to the overall picture on successor arrangements to EU funding, I highlighted the promises and the commitments that had been made, despite which the reality is that UK Government decisions mean Wales is set to be around £1 billion worse off. I also emphasised the importance of UKG learning lessons from where constructive joint working has proved possible, with co-design and co-decision embedded in the approach.

In relation to implementing the IGR Review, it was agreed that a forward programme of meetings would be developed to enable a structured and regular rhythm of engagement.