

Rt Hon. Alun Cairns MP
Secretary of State for Wales
Wales Office,
Gwydyr House,
Whitehall,
London,
SW1A 2NP

5 July 2016

Dear Alun

Wales Bill

Thank you for your letter sent to my predecessor, David Melding AM, dated 30 June, which we received on 5 July.

As you will be aware, we have expressed our serious concern and disappointment that you have to date been unable to accept our invitation to give evidence on the Wales Bill – a major constitutional piece of legislation that has significant implications for the Assembly.

Our concern has been compounded by two developments: first, the speed with which scrutiny is being undertaken in the House of Commons, reducing the amount of time for considered and measured thought on a significant piece of constitutional law; secondly, by the evidence we have already taken on the Bill from the First Minister and distinguished legal practitioners and academics, which we refer to below.

While we appreciate you have a very busy diary, we have been and remain extremely flexible in terms of a date and time. We have also offered the



opportunity for you to give evidence via video-conference as an alternative, and we hope that this may still be possible if you cannot attend in person.

We are aware that you are coming to address the Assembly on 6 July, and are still unclear why you are unable to give evidence to us on this day, particularly in light of your clear expressed desire – like your predecessor who did appear in front of this Committee – to adopt an open and constructive approach to the Bill.

This Bill is a significant constitutional development for Wales, and it is essential that the Assembly has the opportunity to consider the Bill and the implications for Wales. We have built relationships with key stakeholders and Welsh citizens, which helps inform our scrutiny, and we feel that bringing this expertise to bear on scrutiny of the Bill, will help the UK Government to deliver the lasting, durable settlement that you, and we, are seeking.

We have already heard clear and authoritative evidence that while the Bill is an improvement on the draft Bill in some areas, as currently drafted it could impact negatively on the current devolution settlement. Significant concerns remain over the Bill's unnecessary complexity, its durability, and the potential for a detrimental impact on the Assembly's ability to legislate in a coherent and joined up-manner. We believe that the opportunity to explore these issues with you directly would be of benefit to the development of the Bill and would help deliver our shared aim of seeking a fair settlement for Wales.

If we cannot persuade you to appear before us to explain the impact of the Bill on the existing devolution settlement, our report will have to make it clear that it has been materially affected by your decision not to attend.

I do hope you will look favourably on this further request.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies

Huw Irranca-Davies AM
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

