

The Rt Hon the Lord Lang of Monkton
Chair
Constitution Committee
House of Lords,
London,
SW1A 0PW

Ref: 514SUB 16

12th December 2016

Dear Sir

Thank you for the Constitution Committee's report on the Wales Bill. I am grateful to the Committee for its consideration of the Bill. I enclose a copy of the Government's response to your report.

The Wales Bill delivers the Government's commitments in the St David's Day Agreement to put in place a clear, strong and lasting devolution settlement for Wales. It makes devolution stronger by devolving significant new powers to the National Assembly for Wales in areas such as energy, transport and elections. This is delivered within the new reserved powers model that establishes a clear boundary between the responsibilities of Parliament and the UK Government, and the responsibilities of the National Assembly and the Welsh Government.

The Government has given careful consideration to the Committee's report and has listened to the debate on the Bill more widely. We have made a number of changes to the Bill in its passage through the Lords where we have been persuaded of the case for change, including the devolution of teachers' pay and conditions. The Government is tabling further amendments for debate at Lords Report stage, including the replacement of Secretary of State powers of intervention in relation to water with a statutory agreement (a "water protocol") between the UK Government and the Welsh Government.

The Bill's Lords stages have also enabled me to clarify how the Government sees the new reserved powers model working in practice, helping to allay a number of concerns in respect of the model, and in particular the "relates to" test.

I believe the Wales Bill, in light of the amendments the Government is bringing forward at Report stage, stands in good stead to deliver a clear and lasting devolution settlement for Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lord Bourne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Lord Bourne
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales