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Mick Antoniw AM

Chair, Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

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10 May 2018

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 26 April 2018 to the Minister for the Constitution regarding the UK Government's understanding of devolution. We are writing with a joint response to your request.

We agree that it is critical that UK civil servants understand the unique nature of the devolution settlements. The *Devolution and You* programme addresses this need through a cross-administration campaign led by the UK Government in partnership with the Welsh and Scottish Governments. Close collaboration with Welsh and Scottish Government colleagues has led to the development of quality assured training materials which are utilised across Whitehall. Devolution learning is promoted across the UK Government, through online learning, departmental workshops and induction programmes. Over 2000 civil servants have taken part in the *Devolution and You* programme in 2017, in addition to the many training programs operated by UK Government departments. *Devolution and You* also provides civil service interchange opportunities through the One Civil Service Interchange programme, which is now in its third year. Interchange provides a unique opportunity for civil servants of all administrations to immerse themselves in the structures and cultures of another administration, building their network across the Civil Service and improving their confidence in engaging across different administrations. We are confident that departments and the UK Government as a whole understand the new Welsh devolution settlement. The Wales Office worked intensively with all UK Government departments to develop the Wales Bill, including working through particular reservations with individual departments following publication of the draft Bill. We have been raising awareness of the new devolution settlement through the *Devolution and You* programme since the Wales Act was passed in January 2017. The Wales Office is also rolling out a programme of bespoke training sessions across Whitehall in the coming weeks, specifically covering the new devolution settlement

in Wales so that as many officials as possible across departments are aware of the key changes that took place on 1 April. There will be teams and individuals within departments who would benefit from further training sessions about the new settlement and our departments are targeting our engagement to particular teams, such as those working on policy areas with regular engagement with the Welsh Government or Bill teams who's Bills are likely to involve a Legislative Consent Motion.

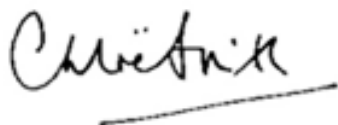
In recent months we have also worked extensively with officials across UK Government departments, and consulted officials in the Welsh Government and Assembly Commission, to develop specific guidance for UK Government departments regarding working with the new reserved powers model, Devolution Guidance Note 18. This guidance has been published on GOV.UK. We will continue to prioritise this work through the *Devolution and You* programme and targeted interventions on the Wales Act 2017 in particular.

In relation to representation of the Wales Office in the UK Government, the Wales Office is a Department of State in its own right and the Director is the Accounting Officer for the Department. The Secretary of State for Wales remains accountable to the Prime Minister alone and through attendance at Cabinet and EU Exit Committee meetings can feed the views of stakeholders in Wales directly into the heart of Government.

As a part of UK Governance Group, the Wales Office is represented at Permanent Secretary meetings by Philip Rycroft, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Exiting the European Union. This role acts as an important link, ensuring coordination of constitutional matters across the UK and especially the UK's exit from the European Union. The need to coordinate our policy and approach makes it only sensible that there is a UK Governance Group, comprising parts of the Cabinet Office, the Wales Office, Scotland Office and Office of the Advocate General for Scotland. This enables the departments to work together on challenging cross-cutting issues and allows for greater coordination and cohesion of policy. This arrangement in no way dilutes or deflects the purpose and priorities of the Wales Office: it remains Wales's voice within the UK Government and the UK Government's voice in Wales.

Finally, we believe the rationale for One Civil Service supporting the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government remains strong. Civil servants working for all of our administrations carry out their roles to the highest standard and in accordance with the Civil Service Code's core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. By supporting the UK Government in matters which affect all of the UK as well as in relation to one or more of its constituent parts, civil servants working for UK Government departments can ensure that it works to benefit people in every part of our country.

Yours sincerely,



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