



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Mick Antoniw AM, Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee
David Rees AM, Chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
National Assembly for Wales

29 November 2018

Dear both,

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 29 October, sent on behalf of the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

I welcome the Forum's interest in the relations between governments across the UK. The Welsh Government has been in the vanguard of calls for reform of intergovernmental relations; we set these out in 'Brexit and Devolution', which we published almost 18 months ago, and which itself built on positions outlined initially in 'Securing Wales' Future'. I believe our ideas are gaining traction: there is a growing recognition that we need a different way of working, because the current structures are not capable of bearing the weight EU withdrawal is placing upon them.

Our position in these matters is very much aligned with those expressed by a number of committees in recent years, as summarised in the annex to your letter, and I am able to assure you that we are taking careful note of the findings of these committees. Indeed, one of the first products undertaken as part of the IGR review was a review of the evidence from external commentators, including parliamentarians and academics, about the current state of intergovernmental relations, and recommendations for reform.

The need for reform is further demonstrated by our recent experiences in respect of the Ministerial Forum for EU negotiations. We welcomed the creation of the Forum, which is a sub-group of the JMC (EN) and a useful addition to the intergovernmental machinery, with the aim of allowing the views of the Devolved Administrations to feed into the negotiations process.

However, the quality of engagement in that Forum has been below expectations. Whilst some fruitful discussions have now been held on specific topics like cooperative accords, engagement on major elements of the negotiations has been unsatisfactory.

We remain disappointed and frustrated by the lack of meaningful engagement more widely. We were not shown or provided the detail of the draft Withdrawal Agreement or the political declaration before it was published, despite the fact that the UK Government cannot speak for the whole UK on many of the issues covered – many are in areas within the devolved competence of Welsh Ministers and the National Assembly for Wales.

It nevertheless remains essential that we present the Welsh Government's position at every opportunity. We fully expect to be involved in the detailed negotiations with the EU on the future economic partnership on matters within our devolved competence, and have made clear that we believe the model used to prepare for Council negotiations on fisheries in particular is one we should build upon to make sure the views of the devolved administrations are incorporated into the UK negotiating position.

The Welsh Government is keen to see the development of inter-parliamentary relationships through initiatives such as the Forum, and whilst these relationships are a matter for the Assembly and the other legislatures, we would be willing to participate in work to facilitate their development.

I am copying this letter to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations at the Scottish Government.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Mark Drakeford AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid
Cabinet Secretary for Finance