



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

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Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
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Clare Adamson MSP
Convener, Constitution, Europe, External
Affairs and Culture Committee

19th December 2023

Dear Clare,

Thank you for your letter of 7 November 2023, following the 27 October meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum.

As you know, Common Frameworks are jointly agreed ways of working, and no one government is in a position to respond to a recommendation for a change to the programme without the consensus of all parties. My officials have therefore engaged with devolved administration officials regarding the position set out below.

I share the view that mutual transparency between Government and the devolved administrations is crucial to both sound intergovernmental working and for effective scrutiny of intergovernmental working. As you observe, the management of the regulatory picture across the UK needs good intergovernmental working, given that a substantial part of the regulatory portfolio is within devolved competence. This is exactly why the Common Frameworks programme is so important, and why I am both so pleased to see, and encourage, the embedding of the programme across the four governments, in my capacity as Minister for Intergovernmental Relations.

In terms of Common Frameworks reporting, the agreed annual reporting for fully implemented Frameworks will provide a key tool for enabling the scrutiny of the programme by both legislatures and indeed the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee. The second report for the Hazardous Substances Common Framework will be issued in due course. Furthermore, almost all Common Frameworks will be reviewed on their first year of full operation, and most review reports (including any plans for amending a Common Framework) will be shared with the legislatures.

Any decision to report to legislatures on the provisional Common Frameworks would require the agreement of constitutional ministers in the Government and the devolved administrations. This was the case previously when agreement was reached for annual reporting on fully implemented Frameworks. As you are aware, however, the Northern Ireland Executive is not currently in a position to provide this. Though Common Frameworks have been operating provisionally for some time, my department is currently conducting an evaluation of the entire programme, which is likely to be published in the Spring. This has involved significant input from both the relevant Government and devolved administrations departments, which would be duplicated by a further request for reporting. It is preferable to focus current resources on further embedding Frameworks into business as usual policy decision-making within the four governments. This does not, however, preclude individual administrations updating their

respective legislatures on the operations of individual Frameworks where required through the usual processes.

The Government is working closely with the Northern Ireland Civil Service and relevant partners to deliver the return of the Northern Ireland Executive. Officials have been working to ensure that Common Frameworks that have been scrutinised in all legislatures are able to be provided to the Executive (and other governments) for final agreement as soon as that happens. Once that has occurred the reporting period will commence, and reports will be provided after that twelve month period expires.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yours, Michael", with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations