



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing & Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
2 Marsham Street
London
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Baroness Drake
Chair, Constitution Committee
House of Lords

21 March 2024

Dear Baroness Drake,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March 2024, following the 29 February meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum, which Minister Buchan attended on my behalf.

I welcome the continued interest the Forum has shown with regards to the Common Frameworks programme. This Forum provides the opportunity to strengthen accountability and transparency for outcomes in policy areas in which the devolved administrations lead, as well as discussion on shared challenges. The UK Government deeply values transparency, accountability, and effective scrutiny by Parliament and the broader public on Government's participation in intergovernmental structures.

I strongly welcome the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly. With their new powers and a funding package worth over £3 billion, we have the opportunity and responsibility to deliver a more prosperous future for all people in Northern Ireland. I share your view that the restoration of devolved institutions in Northern Ireland will make it possible to make substantial progress in implementing Common Frameworks.

The Provision of Services Common Framework completed stakeholder engagement on 23 February. The results from that exercise will now be considered. The Framework will then be submitted to ministers in the Department of Business and Trade and relevant devolved administration (DAs) departments, for provisional sign off and publication for scrutiny.

The development of the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Common Framework has been paused following the passage of the Professional Qualifications Act 2022. This is given practical considerations around the Act's implementation and the role of any Common Framework, and until a consultation on the implementation of Sections 3 and 5 of the Act is concluded. A pause will allow for analysis by officials in DLUHC and the DAs supporting the Common Frameworks programme on the impact of an alternative approach.

Regarding the evaluation, the expectation is to publish it before the summer as my officials are completing the final data collection phase with input from Government and DA departments. The final report will be shared with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, and NI Executive. The findings can then feed into the first review of each Common Framework. I will be happy to provide the forum with a copy of the evaluation once completed.

The legislatures have played, and will continue to play, a vital role. Although I cannot comment on how the legislative branch ought to scrutinise the functioning of the programme, I do note

the commitment of current and former committee members to the Common Framework's programme's improvement has been a positive force. This is further emphasised by the attention the Forum has given to Common Frameworks. In line with the final letter I received from the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee, however, I would consider it appropriate for the remaining scrutiny of Frameworks by the UK Parliament (and the future holding of departments to account for their operation) to take place through Departmental committees. This aligns with the ambition to embed Common Frameworks firmly into business as usual.

My view is that the Forum has got the balance broadly right: the constitutional committees represented in the Forum ensures its continued good coverage of the programme, while allowing Government and DAs to benefit from members' collective insights on the programme.

With every good wish

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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