

Baroness Andrews
Chair, Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee,
House of Lords

1 December 2021

Dear Lady Andrews,

Common Frameworks

Thank you for sending my Committee a copy of the letter you sent to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP about common frameworks, which we considered at our meeting on 15 November. We would also welcome sight of any response you receive given the important points you raised.

It may be helpful if I set out the role I envisage for my Committee in relation to the scrutiny of common frameworks. We will be undertaking a general oversight role focusing on the overall impact of frameworks on the operation of the devolution settlement, including their relationships with the *United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020* and international obligations. While we may look to scrutinise some individual frameworks, we expect that role to fall largely on subject committees in the Senedd.

We are concerned at the delays to publishing provisional common frameworks and the limited time that may be available as a consequence for committees to scrutinise them. Nevertheless, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you and counterpart committees in the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly how we might work together on scrutiny of provisional frameworks.

On this point you may wish to be aware of the following comment by the Welsh Government's Counsel General in correspondence with the Committee:

"The length of the framework scrutiny process is of course a matter for committees. It would be hugely desirable if the frameworks could be scrutinised and signed off before the beginning of Northern Ireland's pre-election period. This date has not

yet been confirmed but it is likely to be in late March if the elections take place as scheduled on 5 May."

We share your recognition that the common frameworks programme is an iterative process, and we consider it likely that ongoing scrutiny will be needed as the frameworks develop over time and the effects of their operation become more apparent.

We believe there is considerable scope for interparliamentary co-operation on the scrutiny of frameworks, in addition to any discussion that may take place within the ambit of a reconvened Interparliamentary Forum. In that spirit of co-operative working I enclose an exchange of correspondence we have had with the Welsh Government (that I have referred to above), which highlights some of our concerns but also provides useful information on how, from the Welsh Government's perspective, matters are progressing between governments.

I am copying this letter to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for the Executive Office, the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, and the House of Commons' Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies

Huw Irranca-Davies
Chair