



Welsh Affairs Committee

Rt Hon Sir Robert Buckland KC MP
Secretary of State for Wales
Gwydyr House
London
SW1A 2NP

22 September 2022

Dear Robert,

Congratulations on your recent re-appointment as Secretary of State for Wales.

It was encouraging to see that on your re-appointment you pledged a “strong voice for Wales at the Cabinet table” and that you recognised some of the important issues facing the people of Wales, particularly the cost of living and rising energy bills.

The Committee looks forward to a constructive working relationship with you and I hope you will be able to accept our invitation to give evidence on a regular basis to allow us to fulfil our scrutiny remit. In the first instance, we would like to invite you to come before the Committee on Wednesday 2 November.

Your statement on re-appointment also mentioned continuing to deliver “the investment Wales needs”, including through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). On 7 September we held an evidence session on the UKSPF with the Welsh Local Government Association and other Welsh council leaders; and David Phillips of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. I attach the transcript with this letter.

The evidence session raised some questions on which we would welcome your assistance, and which I have also sent to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. If your response could focus on the role of the Wales Office in these matters, that would be particularly helpful.

1. Why did the Government decide not to take account of population in the deprivation component of the funding allocation formula?
 - a. How did the Government take account of the views of Welsh local authorities in making this decision?
 - b. Are you content with the allocations which have resulted, particularly for areas with larger populations?
 - c. What assessment have you made of the expected impact on those areas of reduced funding per capita?



Welsh Affairs Committee

2. What factors did the Government take into account in deciding the deadlines for local authorities to submit investment plans and whether authorities were equally equipped to meet those deadlines?
 - a. What assessment have you made of the expected impact on local authorities whose bids to support programmes that are already in place are unsuccessful?
3. What factors were taken into account in deciding that funds under the Multiply programme must be spent in-year with no flexibility to move funding around within the multi-year programme?
 - a. Do you anticipate local authorities being able to spend according to the annual limits rather than in a tapered way across the years?
 - b. Will unspent funds be returned to HM Treasury?
4. Can the funding allocated to local authorities be shared across local authority boundaries if a project will benefit more than one area and there are synergies to be captured through cooperation?
5. Has an assessment been made of the effect of the decision to allocate funds direct to local authorities on the capacity of local authorities to coordinate with Welsh Government projects and avoid overlap?
6. What measureable long-term outcomes do you expect to see from the Shared Prosperity fund allocations to assess its success in levelling up opportunity and prosperity and overcoming deep-seated geographical inequalities in Wales?

I would be very grateful for a reply by the Committee's next meeting on 12 October.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee