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21st December 2020

Dear Simon,

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

I am writing in response to your letter, dated 23 October 2020, to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

I would like to apologise for the length of time it has taken to respond on this subject and I hope you will appreciate that I wanted to be able to give as full a response as possible after the Spending Review announcements on this subject.

I appreciate that as the Brexit transition period draws to a close there is an increasing interest in the Government's replacement for the EU Structural and Investment Funds and I hope that the Spending Review went some way to assuaging some of your concerns with the proposals that were set out.

The UK Shared Prosperity fund is a priority for this Government and work to deliver it is progressing across Whitehall. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. The Fund will achieve quicker delivery, and better targeting of funding, ensuring it reaches the places most in need. It will be better aligned with our domestic priorities and will cut burdensome EU bureaucracy.

The Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the Fund and the UK Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and confirm multi year funding profiles at the next Spending Review. We will ramp up funding for UKSPF so that total UK-wide funding will at least match EU receipts of around £1.5bn a year. In addition, to help local areas prepare over 21/22 for introduction of the UKSPF, the UK Government will provide £220m in additional funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

I can assure you that as plans develop over the course of the next year and in advance of the full UKSPF scheme being published, we will engage with the full spectrum of UK-wide stakeholders, including in Northern Ireland. UK Government officials have been engaging with the devolved administrations and further Ministerial led engagement will take place in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Walker', with a stylized, cursive script.

ROBIN WALKER MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND