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Darren Jones MP
Chair, BEIS Select Committee
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4th May 2021

Dear Darren,

Thank you for your recent letter of 21 April regarding the Company Law Common Framework.

It is worth noting that the Company Law framework is a non-legislative framework that builds on existing constructive working level relationships between officials in the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Northern Ireland Department for Economy (DfE). As such there is no practical change that has been brought into effect due to the existence of this framework. The framework formalises the relationships that already exist and puts in place an agreed, escalation route to resolve any issues between the Departments on a policy approach should they emerge. This is not anticipated based on the continuation of regular, informal engagement between Departments.

The five BEIS Common Frameworks have been provisionally confirmed by the UK Government, and where relevant other Devolved Administrations, but not yet by the IGR ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive. The five BEIS Frameworks are therefore operating on an interim basis at official level through established ways of working.

I will now turn to the specific questions (in italics below) you have raised in your letter on the Company Law Common Framework.

How will this framework be reviewed and revised?

It will be reviewed every three years, by officials in BEIS and DFE, to ensure it is working well for both parties. However, either party can raise concerns and ask for a review at any time if issues arise.

Are there any ongoing negotiations with the Northern Ireland Department for Economy in relation to any elements of this framework?

No, the framework was developed collaboratively between officials in DFE and BEIS.

What will the process of 'meaningful engagement' with the Northern Ireland Assembly consist of if decisions are taken that will affect the common framework?

The Common Frameworks Programme is being led by Cabinet Office, in close collaboration with impacted Departments such as BEIS. I anticipate that where decisions are taken by the Northern Ireland Assembly that might affect Common Frameworks the process for that will be led by Cabinet Office.

Was feedback given by any of the stakeholders involved in the consultation of this framework? If so, please provide a summary of the dates of any meetings and feedback received from each stakeholder

No formal feedback was provided but stakeholders noted and welcomed the existence of the Company Law framework.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin Callaghan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lord Callanan
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State