



# HOUSE OF LORDS

Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee

House of Lords

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17 June 2021

The Rt Hon Chloe Smith MP  
Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
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Dear Chloe,

Thank you for the Government Response to the Committee's report and the letter from Julia Lopez MP on cross cutting issues. We appreciate this positive response from the Government and the constructive way in which you have engaged with our recommendations. However, there are a number of areas where we would welcome more clarity.

In paragraphs 18 and 19 of your response you acknowledge that stakeholders should continue to be meaningfully engaged in the development of frameworks, including through periodic reviews where appropriate and state that this will be led by the relevant departments. Your response does not contain a justification for why engagement should be done on a private rather than public basis. In paragraph 24 you mention that the Cabinet Office is developing guidance on future reviews of the frameworks. Will this guidance include a recommendation that departments consult openly with a wider set of stakeholders than were consulted in the initial development of the frameworks?

In paragraph 22 of your response you acknowledge the delay in frameworks publication due to the Northern Ireland Executive. Are you in active conversations with the Executive about this delay? Are you able to provide any update on the reasons for this delay or when it could be expected to be resolved?

In paragraph 29 of your response you state that there is likely to be value in reporting on divergence under the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland but that the extent to which this is done is a matter for the relevant departments and their equivalents in the devolved administrations, as parties to the framework. We of course recognise that this will be a matter for negotiation. However, perhaps you could tell us in which of the 23 frameworks that intersect with the Protocol the UK Government believes that it would be beneficial to report on divergence? What mechanisms will it be considering in monitoring and reporting on this divergence?

The letter on cross-cutting issues was informative on the policy substance of the areas to resolve. However, it did not provide an update on what your expected timescales were for

resolving these issues with the other administrations. Whilst we recognise that this is not entirely in the Government's control, do you have an estimated timetable for when each issue could be resolved?

We look forward to your response in 10 working days.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Andrews  
Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee