



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Select Committee Chairs
By email

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24 March 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Today we have published the following key documents on the UK government's work on the Union and intergovernmental relations (IGR):

1. A progress update on the IGR review;
2. Our inaugural quarterly report on the UK government's engagement with the devolved administrations; and
3. The Dunlop Review into UK government Union Capability, alongside our response to Lord Dunlop which sets out the government's progress in implementing recommendations.

Copies of all these documents and the government's response to the Dunlop review have been laid in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament and are available on GOV.UK.

This government is committed to protecting and promoting the combined strengths of our Union, building on 300 years of partnership and shared history, and is grateful to Lord Dunlop for undertaking this work and to those who gave evidence and insight to the review. It represents a significant contribution to the debate on how to strengthen the Union and ensure the UK government delivers for people in every part of the UK.

Progress update on the IGR review

As you will know, for the last few years the UK government and the devolved administrations have worked in partnership to revise intergovernmental working arrangements. Significant progress has been made, and I am pleased to be publishing the vast majority of IGR proposals. Also included in the update publication are the small number of areas in which the administrations are yet to reach agreement; these areas are indicated by square brackets, and the text within them represents the UK government's suggested position. We are committed to continuing discussions on these areas after the May elections.

Quarterly report on the UK government's engagement with the devolved administrations

Furthermore, as you will know, in November 2020 the UK government committed by Written Ministerial Statement to a number of measures to improve the transparency and accountability of intergovernmental relations (IGR). I am pleased to inform you that our first quarterly report has also been published. This report summarises the engagement which

has taken place in January and February 2021, as well as providing some contextual background on intergovernmental working since July 2019. It is intended to support the UK Parliament's capacity to scrutinise the UK government's role in intergovernmental relations so that parliamentarians can help guide our approach to strengthening our Union, while also demonstrating our commitment to transparency of IGR. Due to the pre-election period in Wales and Scotland we are publishing this information early; the next quarterly report will be published in July 2021.

As set out in our announcement last year, we will also be laying an annual report on engagement with the devolved administrations by Command Paper in both Houses of Parliament. The first will be published in 2022, summarising all engagement in 2021. We envisage this will further strengthen our transparency and accountability with the UK Parliament, in addition to continuing to demonstrate our commitment to effective and positive intergovernmental relations.

Dunlop Review into UK government Union Capability

I know your Committee has been keen to see the Dunlop report's recommendations. Our focus on managing the COVID-19 crisis has inevitably affected the timetable for publication; however, following receipt of the report we have already progressed, and indeed completed, many of the recommendations, such as establishing the Union Policy Implementation Cabinet Committee, to deliver the government's priorities relating to the Union.

The Dunlop review proposes a package of measures to address the challenge of strengthening the UK; from the Cabinet through to organisational structure, civil service presence, capability and communications. Implementing these recommendations will mean the UK government can better serve the needs of citizens all over the UK. I attach a copy of the letter I have sent to Lord Dunlop to set out in further detail the actions we have already taken, or will be taking in the coming months. As agreed, I would be happy to appear before your Committee to give evidence.

I hope that you find these documents interesting and informative.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gove', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and Minister for the Cabinet Office**