



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on the Constitution

House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Tel: 020 7219 1228
constitution@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk/lords

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

25 November 2021

Dear Mr Gove,

Future Governance of the UK inquiry: publication of the intergovernmental relations review and outstanding Dunlop Review recommendations

I write on behalf of the Constitution Committee about its inquiry into the future governance of the UK. The inquiry has considered intergovernmental relations and the Dunlop Review, among other matters.

As Lord Dunlop conducted the independent review of the UK Government's Union Capability and is also a member of the Committee, he has declared an interest in this inquiry.

We are finalising our report for publication in early January. We would therefore be grateful if you could confirm when the outcome of the intergovernmental relations review will be published, as we would like to reflect the most up-to-date position in our report.

With regard to the Dunlop Review, while we note that many of its recommendations have been (or are likely to be) implemented, as set out in your update on the intergovernmental review and letter to Lord Dunlop of 24 March 2021, the status of some recommendations remains unclear. We have included those recommendations in an annex and would be grateful if you could confirm what the Government's position is accordingly.

We also wrote to Neil O'Brien MP on 9 November to invite him to provide evidence to the Committee about English devolution and the Shared Prosperity Fund – both subjects we were unable to discuss with you before the summer recess as they did not form part of your ministerial portfolio at that stage. We very much hope to hear from Mr O'Brien before the Christmas recess – again, so we can reflect the current state of play in our report.

We would also be grateful if you could respond before the House rises for the Christmas recess, to allow us sufficient time to reflect fully the Government's position in our final report.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Taylor of Bolton
Chair of the Constitution Committee

ANNEX: DUNLOP REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – OUTSTANDING GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

<i>Civil service capability</i>
The Cabinet Office should ensure there are outcome-based metrics to continually assess departmental capability. Within departments, the responsible board member should report to the wider board, the department's ministers, and the new Secretary of State for Intergovernmental and Constitutional Affairs on the department's performance and strategy for continual improvement.
Each UK Government department should ensure devolution teams are suitably located within the organisation to have greater visibility and significant influence on wider departmental strategy and policy development.
Senior Civil Service job and person specifications should be amended to include a requirement to demonstrate significant experience working in or with one of the devolved administrations or a Union-related issue.
The [FCDO] should further build on the devolution and Union aspects of its Head and Deputy Head of Mission overseas leadership programme.
<i>Intergovernmental relations</i>
The UK Government should use the new Cabinet sub-committee (recommended earlier) to agree UK Government positions in advance of meetings of the UK Intergovernmental Council and its sub-committees.
<i>Communications</i>
All UK Government departments with policy responsibilities in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should keep up-to-date and accurate data about their activities and spending in those countries. ¹
The UK Government should revise, update and adapt for contemporary circumstances the Scotland analysis programme documents it published in 2014 prior to the Scottish independence referendum. There should be similar programmes for Wales and Northern Ireland. All three analysis programmes should be updated regularly and developed into something that is more akin to a 'State of the Union' Report. ²
UK Government departments should consult the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Intergovernmental and Constitutional Affairs before making major announcements in respect of policies which apply in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
All UK Government communications in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be subject to a strategy overseen by the Secretary of State for Intergovernmental and Constitutional Affairs with the assistance of the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. ³
The Secretary of State for Intergovernmental and Constitutional Affairs should have oversight of all ministerial visits to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and all ministerial visits should be subject to an overall UK communications strategy.
Every UK Government department which is active in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should have a network of stakeholder managers in those nations.

¹ The letter from Michael Gove MP to the Lord Dunlop dated 24 March 2021 said the Government agreed with the underlying principle of the importance of data transparency.

² The letter from Michael Gove MP to the Lord Dunlop dated 24 March 2021 said the Government was carefully considering its response to this recommendation, recognising that circumstances are now very different to those in 2014.

³ The letter from Michael Gove MP to the Lord Dunlop dated 24 March 2021 said a Union Hub was established in the Government Communications Service in autumn 2020.