



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**  
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Dear Baroness Taylor,

Thank you for your letter of 25 November on your Committee's Future Governance of the UK inquiry. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding, which includes responses to additional queries made to my officials.

### **Review of Intergovernmental Relations**

I am pleased to inform you that the Review of Intergovernmental Relations has been agreed by all four governments and was published on 13 January. A copy of the Review is available on GOV.UK and has been deposited in both House libraries. I have attached a copy for your information. Developed jointly by all four governments, the review of Intergovernmental Relations represents how the UK Government and the devolved administrations intend to work with each other, we look forward to implementing and operationalising these new arrangements with them.

### **Dunlop Review**

You asked for updates on specific recommendations made by Lord Dunlop in his review of UK Government Union Capability. Lord Dunlop's recommendations align with the Prime Minister's ambitions to strengthen the working of the United Kingdom. They are just one of the many steps the UK Government is taking to ensure its institutions are working effectively to deliver for citizens across the UK and to realise the benefits of working together as one United Kingdom. We do not see Lord Dunlop's recommendations as distinct workstreams; many of them coincide with our existing thinking and are core to our overall work to strengthen the Union.

On the Dunlop Review recommendations relating to civil service capability, the Union and Constitution Group continues to run a wide-ranging programme of training and learning resources to improve devolution capability across the civil service at all grades, including senior civil servants, delivered in partnership with UK Government departments and the

devolved administrations. As an example, during Devolution Learning Week in November 2021, over 2500 civil servants attended learning events. Objectives relating to building devolution capability are set out in the Cabinet Office's outcome delivery plan and in the Government Statement of Reform. The Senior Civil Service (SCS) Strategic Plan specifically coordinates the delivery of SCS focused actions that flow from the Declaration on Government Reform, which we will use to define the agreed level of skills, knowledge and confidence of SCS in a number of core areas including devolution.

We monitor and evaluate progress against these objectives through a number of processes, including an annual survey across UK Government departments and devolved administrations. Departments also have their own programmes and structures to build capability on devolution and intergovernmental working.

As part of the government reform declaration we are working to increase interchange between civil servants across administrations, deepening the ties that bind us across the UK. We have refreshed the programme, shifting the focus of the action away from week-long interchanges to a more ambitious and meaningful approach on intergovernmental loans and secondments. Initially we are focussed on delivering a number of strategic placements that can demonstrate the value of secondments to home and host organisations creating pathways for more exchanges in the future. We see this as a key lever to strengthen intergovernmental working to deliver outcomes for citizens across the UK.

Lord Dunlop also made a specific recommendation on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Heads of Mission overseas leadership programme, which includes a day dedicated to working with the devolved administrations and promoting the interests of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales overseas. This has been extended to the Deputy Heads of Mission programme. In addition, the FCDO has updated its guidance to staff, both in the UK and overseas, to increase their understanding on devolution and to highlight the importance of the FCDO's overseas network delivering for all parts of the UK. The FCDO will continue to equip its staff to make a positive and proactive case for the UK overseas, including strengthening its devolution and Union content within its International Academy foundation and practitioner level courses.

On the Dunlop Review recommendations relating to communications, this government understands the importance of ensuring the benefits of the Union are clear, visible and recognised in all parts of the United Kingdom. The DLUHC Union and Constitution Group and the territorial offices play an important role in coordinating UK Government communications and engagement activity in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including ministerial visits and official-led engagement with stakeholders.

In addition to sustaining the visibility of ministers and officials, we continue to build effective relationships with stakeholders across the whole of the UK and increase our presence on the ground in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to make sure that representative views from communities across all of the UK inform policy development and decision making. We also continue to work directly with the devolved administrations and others to deliver better outcomes for citizens across the UK. This effective collaboration has been seen throughout our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are also working directly and closely with partners at all levels of government and with a variety of sectors across Scotland, Wales and Northern

Ireland, including those closest to the local needs of citizens, to effectively deliver a number of local growth funds UK-wide, such as the Levelling Up and the Community Ownership Funds.

Finally, Lord Dunlop recommended that the UK Government should refresh the Scotland Analysis completed in 2014 and undertake similar programmes for Wales and Northern Ireland. The 2014 analysis was undertaken in unique circumstances. Where it is appropriate to do so, it is right the UK Government makes available to the public data on UK Government policies. The UK Government already routinely publishes a considerable amount of data about UK Government policy in each of the nations of the UK, for example, HMRC have published key statistics like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for all nations and regions of the UK. In addition, the UK Government is working to increase the availability of UK-wide data. The UK Concordat on Statistics was recently refreshed and reflects a renewed commitment for the UK Government and the devolved administrations to work together towards a more coherent statistical picture across the UK.

### **Machinery of Government**

You asked for information on the recent machinery of government change. On 23 September 2021 the Prime Minister announced via a written ministerial statement in the House of Commons that responsibility for driving forward the levelling up agenda, elections and UK governance and devolution policy would move to a new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

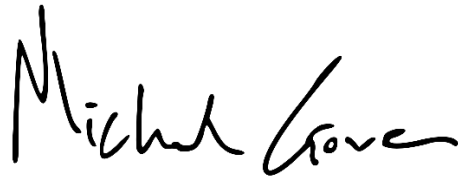
The new department consists of staff previously employed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, including those leading on English devolution, and some teams from the Union and Constitution Group in the Cabinet Office. Responsibility for the Cabinet Committees focused on the Government's Union policy and strategy, Constitutional Policy and secretariat functions supporting the formal Intergovernmental Relations structures remain within the Cabinet Office. I am also the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and Sue Gray continues to be the Permanent Secretary for the Union and Constitution with responsibility for teams in both the Cabinet Office and DLUHC. The UK Governance Group remains an umbrella group for those teams in Cabinet Office, DLUHC, the Office for Secretary of State for Scotland, Office for Secretary of State for Wales and for the Advocate General for Scotland; with UKGG working closely with the Northern Ireland Office.

### **Shared Prosperity Fund**

I have also seen your correspondence requesting additional information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The government is committed to providing your committee with further information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Policy development continues and is in its final phases, ahead of the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper. We remain committed to engaging Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the UKSPF and are undertaking further engagement with each devolved administration to determine the scope of their role so that we can facilitate the best possible outcomes across the UK.

I would be extremely grateful if you could share with me your report from your inquiry into the Future Governance of the UK when it is available, and I would welcome continuing dialogue with you and your committee on these very important issues.

**With every good wish,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for  
Intergovernmental Relations**