



HOUSE OF LORDS

Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee

House of Lords
London

SW1A 0PW

Tel: 020 7219 8664

hlcommonframeworks@parliament.uk

27 October 2021

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

Dear Michael,

I write on behalf of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee to welcome you to your new post.

We understand that as you have taken responsibilities for the Union into DLUHC with you, this also means that your new department and your Under-Secretary of State, Neil O'Brien, now have responsibility for the Common Frameworks Programme. We have already been in contact with Mr O'Brien, and we look forward to meeting him very soon to discuss the progress of the Common Frameworks, and their contribution to ensuring a cooperative Union.

In the meantime, we look to you for reassurance that the Common Frameworks Programme will maintain its profile inside DLUHC, and its significance within Government as a whole because as you would agree, Common Frameworks are a source of strength and innovation for the Union. This power to make a difference could be lost by the move away from the Cabinet Office which gave the Programme both profile and energetic central purpose, unless a positive attempt is made to maintain and communicate its significance to the whole of your department. It would carry consequences across the UK if it were seen as just one more element of domestic or local policy.

We raise this point specifically because, in the list of policy areas assigned to Mr O'Brien, there is no mention of Common Frameworks and we wonder why that is? Equally, we are concerned as to whether the expertise and the careful relationships established by the excellent Cabinet Office team that we have worked with to drive improvements in the Programme will continue, and where will they be located.

Common Frameworks are still fragile, and the Programme is far from finished. It is highly iterative, and a great deal of work lies ahead of us as a Committee, not least with the devolved administrations themselves. If the frameworks are to realise their promise of underpinning a stronger and more effective Union, there needs to be central coordination, drive, and invigilation. Given the move to your new department, and given the delicate

state of relationships with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, we would ask how you intend to ensure that this continues, and that the Frameworks become a visible part of your department's work programme.

We have no doubt that the state of the Union is a matter close to your heart as Secretary of State, and that the issues raised by Common Frameworks will be given the weight that they must have. In that context you may be interested in the debate in the House of Lords, on Wednesday 13 October on our first report, which sets out some of the issues that still need to be addressed as we go forward.

Thank you very much indeed.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Andrews
Chair of the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee