



Ein cyf/Our ref

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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11 June 2021

Dear Prime Minister

I welcomed the collective discussion at last week's summit on the relationship between the UK Government (UKG) and the Devolved Governments, and on how we can work together on Covid recovery and more broadly. I hope that the summit can prove to be a turning point in improving these relationships, and in supporting constructive and collaborative work on areas of common interest for the benefit of citizens across the four countries which together form the UK.

There were a number of comments which you, the Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (CDL) made during the discussion which gave me grounds for encouragement, if they can be translated through into tangible action.

In the first part of the discussion I noted in particular the CDL's comments on wanting any use of the UK Internal Market Act financial assistance powers by the UKG to be in a way that 'goes with the grain' of thinking from each Devolved Government in relation to their devolved policy responsibilities in their respective countries. If this does lead to the UKG pursuing a new approach, with actions that demonstrate a genuine respect for devolution and spirit of open partnership, we would respond positively and constructively. It is vital, in my view, for the UKG to move away from the current approach which inevitably creates conflict, undermines trust, and weakens rather than strengthens the union. On this basis, urgent follow up work to collectively develop a structured intergovernmental process at official and Ministerial level to give proper effect to the positive intent expressed at the summit – including enabling agreement to be reached on any specific proposals – is of fundamental importance. Having an agreed approach is essential for avoiding duplication, and for providing maximum clarity to businesses and others, which you recognised as important.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I welcomed your positive response to the point I raised on ensuring collective work on Covid recovery is embedded within the engagement arrangements envisaged in the Inter-Governmental Relations Review (IGRR). Resolving the outstanding issues and completing the IGRR is therefore a critical priority. This will help to achieve what I think the discussion showed we all supported – namely a move away from the ad hoc, inconsistent engagement that has inhibited joint work in recent years, and enable a structured basis for genuinely joint decision-making with a spirit of respect and ‘no surprises’. The papers from the Devolved Governments highlighted a range of critical issues in relation to Covid recovery work, in particular in areas where devolved and reserved responsibilities interconnect, and I look forward to further collective work on the issues and asks outlined in these papers.

The commitment from the Chancellor that the UKG would not be returning to a path of austerity is strongly welcomed. This is vital in ensuring that our public services can provide the support and investment in the years ahead which is desperately needed by those individuals, families, communities, businesses and others deeply affected by the pandemic. As discussed, an investment-driven approach to Covid recovery is absolutely essential, and this must have at its heart a commitment to address the deep inequalities which have been highlighted and also heightened by the pandemic.

The return signalled to a multi-year spending review is also important in providing certainty on future budgets to assist planning. I hope that this spending review can be undertaken in an open way with early sharing of information and discussions in confidence with the Devolved Governments.

I also noted with interest your comments towards the end of the meeting on social care being a valuable area on which governments could look to work together. I agree that there is important and urgent consideration needed of this, recognising the interaction between devolved responsibilities for these services and the wider welfare and tax system.

I hope that it will be possible to make swift progress on the areas highlighted in this letter, working together in a way that respects the devolved settlements and institutions.

I am copying this letter to the First Minister of Scotland, the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD