



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Intergovernmental Relations Quarterly Report

Quarter 3 2021

Reporting period 1 July - 30 September 2021

*Reporting on intergovernmental working between
the UK Government, Welsh Government, Scottish
Government and Northern Ireland Executive*

14 December 2021

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The United Kingdom is a family of nations with distinctive strengths and qualities. How the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive work together, or ‘intergovernmental relations,’ are a central aspect of creating a United Kingdom that works for the benefit of every individual.

Over this period, we have come together, drawn upon our combined strength and pooled our resources, to deliver for individuals across the UK. There is no better example than our coordination of the pandemic response, as evidenced by the success of the UK-wide vaccination programme and roll-out of the booster programme. The United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), hosted by the United Kingdom in Glasgow this November, was also a historic moment where our collective energies combined, leading the charge against the climate crisis.

In my role as Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, I am delighted to continue working closely with the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive ensuring that our relations and ways of working are strengthened for the long-term. Transparency and public accountability remain at the heart of the UK Government's approach to joint working, and I am pleased to publish our third quarterly report on intergovernmental relations for the period between 1 July and 30 September.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove".

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

REACHING NET ZERO

As countries begin to recover from COVID-19, we have a historic opportunity to tackle climate change at the same time – to build back better, and greener.

Last month we hosted the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. It concluded with 197 Parties agreeing the Glasgow Climate Pact to urgently keep 1.5°C alive. While the spotlight was clearly on the conference itself, it was the culmination of years of work across the UK and the world. In preparing for the summit, the COP President, the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, met devolved administration ministers at the 4th meeting of their joint COP26 group in September, to discuss UK objectives for COP26. Recognising the unique role the Scottish Government had to play in supporting the Glasgow event, there were two additional meetings in August, focused on ensuring a safe and secure COP26. The Prime Minister also invited the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland to a meeting in October to discuss items including COP26 and the shared climate action challenge.

The UK was the first of the world's leading economies to legislate to achieve net zero by 2050, putting us at the forefront of global leadership in addressing climate change. We know that decarbonising transport across the UK has a huge role to play in reaching this and, on 14 July, the UK Government's Transport Decarbonisation plan was published. It is only through a collaborative approach that all parts of the UK will be able to make the policy changes needed, and therefore the transport minister at the time, Rachel Maclean MP, met devolved administration ministers to receive feedback on the plan.

In July, the previous Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland, David Duguid MP, hosted a roundtable alongside the Scottish Government to consider reaching net zero in Scotland, the "Together for our Planet" campaign, and COP26. In September, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Scotland), Iain Stewart MP, met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the roles their representative bodies could play and how UK Government funding can support them. This followed an August visit to Ayrshire, as part of the UK Government's support for the Ayrshire Growth Deal, to hear more about the Community Renewable Energy Project, which seeks to use existing assets in East Ayrshire for generating renewable energy. David Duguid MP and the former Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, opened the new Oil and Gas UK offices in Aberdeen, toured the European Marine Energy Centre's Orbital 2 power station in Orkney, and met energy stakeholders



and local authorities to discuss renewables and net zero plans. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales, David TC Davies MP, also met with local partners working on the Swansea Bay City Deal in July to hear about the Deal's 'Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth programme', which aims to find solutions to the decarbonisation of commercial and industrial buildings, transport and industrial processes in the region.

On 15 July 2021 the Prime Minister set out his ambition to level up every part of the UK. Following this, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) was created to take forward this central mission and lead a whole of government effort to address regional disparities across the UK.

This chapter sets out some of the work the UK Government has begun to do in this area, including engaging with local stakeholders in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the devolved administrations. It is the starting point of more collaborative working with the devolved administrations to ensure that growth and prosperity comes to all four corners of the UK.

The UK Government is committed to ensuring that individuals' opportunities are not determined by the area in which they live. To support this, in July 2021 the previous Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, met with devolved administration finance ministers to discuss economic growth and spending across the UK. Shortly after his appointment in September 2021, the current Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP, held introductory meetings to continue this engagement.

In preparation for the Autumn Budget and Spending Review announcement on 27 October 2021, ministers considered how best to ensure the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund provides infrastructure that improves lives across the whole of the UK. For example, over the course of three days in September, Iain Stewart MP, hosted drop-in session style roundtables with representatives from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and 32 local authorities in Scotland to gather feedback on their experience of the introduction of the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund and Community Ownership Fund.

Freeports are being established to regenerate local communities, create high quality, high wage jobs, and ensure the UK is at the centre of global trade and investment. In order to ensure the benefits are UK wide, the Secretary of State for Scotland met with the Scottish Government's Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise in July to discuss the establishment of a Scottish freeport.



Intra-UK connectivity is vital to levelling up economic growth, job creation and social cohesion. In March, Sir Peter Hendy published his interim report on the Union Connectivity Review (UCR). In response, the UK Government made £20 million of development funding available to develop plans for upgraded rail, road, sea and air links. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, Baroness Vere, met the Welsh Government on 15 September to discuss the UCR, the 2020/21 £20m Union Connectivity Development Fund, the Levelling Up Fund, and other shared transport matters. On digital connectivity, the former Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, visited Northern Ireland on 23 August following an announcement of a £25m extension to the Project Stratum Gigabit-capable Broadband Project that will reach another 6,500 premises in Northern Ireland.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The success of the UK-wide vaccine roll-out and the burgeoning booster programme have been instrumental in the fight against the virus, saving lives and reducing pressure on our public services. However, the sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic and steps towards recovery continue to require intergovernmental effort.

The Prime Minister continues to lead this intergovernmental dialogue. He invited the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland to a meeting in October to discuss shared challenges of COVID-19 over the winter and developments since their previous meeting.

Acknowledging the winter challenges in health and social care systems, and looking ahead to 2022 priorities, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, and former Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, continued to have regular engagement with devolved administration health ministers to coordinate UK responses and share lessons and expertise from each nation. This included weekly Secretary of State meetings to share information and resolve matters such as COVID-19 and Flu vaccine deployment, testing resilience, social care, the review of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and COVID-19 Certification. This has been underpinned by daily engagement between civil servants across all areas, including Chief Medical Officers, and joint representation on

the board led by Dr. Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the Health Security Agency, to coordinate the respective test, trace, contain, protect programmes, as well as work around EU and trade policy, social care reform and supply of medical goods.

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, in his previous role as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, continued to hold regular calls with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland to ensure a coordinated pandemic response, with support from UK Government ministers. The meetings discussed the current stage of the pandemic, for example autumn/winter strategies and certification.



In regard to education, a few days after his appointment as Secretary of State for Education in September 2021, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP met each of his ministerial counterparts in the devolved administrations. They discussed qualifications and plans for grading in 2022, recognising the importance of finding an approach to grading that puts fairness for past, present and future students from each nation at its core, particularly for those moving across borders to progress to higher education with 2022 results. The Secretary of State for Education welcomed agreement for education ministers to meet regularly in the future to continue discussions. This will include sharing approaches to education recovery to address lost learning during the pandemic, and exploring further areas of policy exchange and collaboration that can mutually benefit young people across the UK.

Close work continues on supporting tourism recovery across the UK, boosting skills in the sector and supporting our transition to a higher wage, higher skilled economy. The Minister for Sport and Tourism, Nigel Huddleston MP, met tourism ministers of the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the economy minister of the Northern Ireland Executive in July to discuss this topic. The tourism team in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) continues to hold Tourism Industry Council meetings every two months to discuss live issues with representatives from the devolved administrations, businesses, sector bodies, and other stakeholders.

The Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets, Paul Scully MP, met his counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss labour market issues across a number of sectors including retail and hospitality.

Nigel Huddleston MP also visited Belfast between 10 - 12 August to both demonstrate the UK Government's commitment to the joint UK-Ireland FIFA World Cup 2030 bid and to support the heritage and tourism sectors following the pandemic. Senior civil servants are meeting monthly in the FIFA World Cup 2030 Government Partnership Group. DCMS has worked closely with government partners on other major sporting events that we are considering jointly bidding for, such as the Tour de France Grand Depart, as well as events already secured, including the recent men's UEFA European Championship (EURO 2020). On the cultural sectors, the former Minister for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dineage MP met with the new Scottish and Welsh Government arts and culture ministers and Northern Ireland counterparts in July to discuss sector positions and COVID-19 recovery plans for the rest of the year.

Effective policing has, and continues to be, an important aspect of the COVID-19 response. The Minister for Crime and Policing, the Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP, in July chaired the National Policing Board, which was attended by ministers and police leaders from all parts of the UK. They discussed issues affecting policing, including lessons learned during COVID-19 to build back safer, addressing cross-border criminality, major events and future collaboration. The meeting resulted in continued engagement with the National Police Chief Council to embed learning from the national response to COVID-19 "Operation Talla", and liaising with Ministers Naomi Long MLA and Keith Brown MSP regarding what more could be done on the sharing of sensitive information across the system. Recognising the importance of protecting our police force, the UK Government has committed to enshrining a new Police Covenant in law to enhance support and protection. The Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, also chaired the Police Covenant Oversight Board with policing stakeholders and Welsh Government

representatives. Actions included further developing the potential offer for families and the role of a Chief Medical Officer for Policing.

INTERNATIONAL

During this reporting quarter, the UK Government continued to engage with the devolved administrations on the implementation of Group of Seven (G7) commitments laid out at the Carbis Bay Leaders' Summit in June. This includes working closely on G7 outreach, specifically discussing the capacity within the devolved administrations for further youth engagement.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in the UK and overseas, continued to work with the devolved administrations on a range of issues, including providing information on the continuing global pandemic, specifically the COVID-19 vaccine supply and COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) to Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and on travel advice. There were also updates on human rights and humanitarian aid in Cuba and Yemen, and the human rights situation in Xinjiang, China. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas, Wendy Morton MP, visited Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis Centre, a beneficiary of FCDO funding, on 2 September, to hear about the specialist advice provided to UK nationals who have reported cases of sexual violence overseas.

As the UK led efforts to evacuate refugees from Afghanistan, close working across the UK with devolved and local government was vital for ensuring refugees could settle as soon as possible. DLUHC has continued to engage closely with the devolved administrations and key organisations across the UK to identify and address strategic barriers preventing property offers and, more broadly, to support the successful resettlement and integration of Afghan arrivals. The resettlement scheme, immigration and security issues were discussed at a meeting between the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Government in September.

Ministry of Defence ministers have engaged proactively with devolved administration ministers to discuss how defence can benefit industry within the United Kingdom. Senior members of the United Kingdom's armed forces attended the opening of the RAF's Wales Battle of Britain Exhibition in Cardiff City Hall to commemorate the contribution that Welsh citizens made to the United Kingdom's victory in the Battle of Britain and the important role that they continue to play in the defence of our United Kingdom.

Meanwhile, there have been positive developments in achieving the UK's trade ambitions following exit from the EU. The UK Government has continued working with the devolved administrations on implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the free trade agreement signed with the EU in December 2020. Since the devolved administration ministers' attendance at the first meeting of the Partnership Council, they have continued to participate in regular meetings of the formerly named EU Exit Operations Cabinet Committee, which had



responsibility for monitoring the operational implementation of the agreement. Devolved ministerial representatives also attended the first meetings of the fisheries, energy, social security and sanitary and phytosanitary Specialised Committees between the UK and EU. This has been underpinned by regular civil service engagement to ensure UK and nation-specific interests are heard and represented.

Discussions on future trade deals have continued during this period. The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, former Minister of State for Trade Policy, met with devolved ministers at the 6th Ministerial Forum for Trade in July. The group discussed the ending of the long-running dispute over subsidies to aerospace corporations Airbus and Boeing and the Australia and New Zealand trade deal negotiations. In addition, there was an open discussion on respective aspirations for trade deals with Canada, Mexico and India.

The Office for the Secretary of State for Scotland (OSSS) has continued to engage with the Scottish Government and industry representatives on Scotland's important role in the UK's trade economy and opportunities that will arise following exit from the EU. Following a final meeting of the OSSS-chaired Scottish Seafood Taskforce in July with the Scottish Government and industry representatives, the taskforce published its final report on 26 August. Subsequently David Duguid MP inaugurated the successor Scottish Seafood Industry Action Group on 31 August. The taskforce has discussed amongst other things, export certification and labour supply concerns.



As the UK Government is responsible for the criminal justice system in England and Wales, there is significant close work with the Welsh Government on a range of important issues. In July this year, the previous Minister for Prisons and Probation, Alex Chalk MP, and the Welsh Government's Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, met to discuss the Residential Women's Centre in Wales, the joint Female Offenders and Youth Justice Blueprints programme and the report produced by the Commission on Justice in Wales. The first Residential Women's Centre in Wales will provide accommodation for vulnerable women with complex needs who would otherwise be sentenced to custody. By prioritising early intervention and prevention, both governments are working to make a crucial difference in the lives of the individuals, their families and their communities.

Ministers in the Home Office are continuing to discuss the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. In a meeting with the then Safeguarding Minister, Victoria Atkins MP, Welsh Minister Jane Hutt MS signalled her support for the provisions that require police, local authorities, and others to work together to reduce and prevent crime, and gave provisional agreement to recommend legislative consent for the bill. Civil servants across the two governments will continue to work jointly on drafting the final iteration of the guidance for these provisions.

The UK Government believes there should be equal access to the safeguards in the Extradition Act 2003 for all individuals across the UK who are arrested for extradition, wherever they are arrested in the UK. Lords Minister Baroness Williams, who temporarily covered the Security portfolio, engaged with the Scottish Government in relation to safeguarding provisions for extradition cases, contained in Schedule 20 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, which have now been commenced for Scotland. Commencing these provisions ensured that every person facing extradition proceedings before the courts in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have equal opportunity to benefit from all the safeguarding provisions in the UK's extradition legislation.

Further, Wales Office Minister, David TC Davies MP, attended the Policing Partnership Board for Wales this September, chaired by Jane Hutt MS, with a discussion on the UK Government's Beating Crime Plan.



Whilst COVID-19 remains a pressing issue across all governments, there has been significant engagement with the devolved administrations on other policy areas. For example, the Health and Care Bill, which sets out proposals to reform the delivery and organisation of joined-up health services in England and improve the health of citizens UK-wide. This has seen significant engagement between civil servants and the Minister of State, Edward Argar MP met the Minister for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government during this period.

On 20 July, the UK Government published *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, which explores how the benefits system can better meet the needs of claimants now and in the future by improving claimant experience of its services, enabling independent living and improving employment outcomes. For policy areas discussed in the Green Paper that are devolved, the UK Government continues to talk to the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive to consider how best to provide support for disabled people and people with health conditions. The Green Paper was discussed as part of an introductory meeting with the Scottish Government's new Minister for Social Security and Local Government. The Department for Work and Pensions held public consultation events in Wrexham and Glasgow in September.

In September this year, the former Lord Chancellor, the Rt Hon Robert Buckland MP, had a meeting with Naomi Long MLA, the Northern Ireland Justice Minister. The meeting was part of a visit to Belfast for the Opening of the Legal Year in Northern Ireland.

The former Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith MP, continued to discuss elections legislation during a number of meetings with Welsh and Scottish Government ministers. These meetings included discussions on the UK Government's Elections Bill, currently before the UK Parliament, and the Welsh and Scottish Governments' own separate plans regarding electoral legislation. The new Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities, Kemi Badenoch MP, will join the next Interministerial Group on Elections and Registration to continue discussions.

The UK Government and devolved administrations held a productive meeting in September between Chloe Smith MP, Ministers from Welsh and Scottish Governments, and representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive. The attendees re-asserted the importance of the UK Common Frameworks Programme to manage regulatory divergence arising from the UK no longer being an EU member state and committed to taking a number of practical steps to progress the programme. There has also been regular engagement between Ministers in Northern Ireland on matters relating to the Northern Ireland Protocol, addressing the past and implementing the New Decade, New Approach deal.

On environmental policy, the joint Interministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs met in September chaired by Edwin Poots MLA, Minister for Agriculture, to consider with devolved ministers the recommendations from the independent National Food Strategy Review, led by Henry Dimbleby. This Review looked at the entire food chain, from field to fork including production, marketing, processing, and sale and purchase of food. Ministers also

received an update on the findings from the department's recent public consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies in England and latest thinking on the possible amendment to regulations to permit and encourage investment into research and development of gene edited plants and the potential to bring gene edited products to market.

Taking account of ongoing disruption to supply chains, Baroness Vere held individual meetings with the Scottish Government and Welsh Government Ministers. They discussed how the heavy goods vehicle driver shortage was affecting their respective nations while sharing the UK Government's current approach and how this can be worked to address the concerns and issues they face.



