



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

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Dear Paul and Michelle,

PUBLICATION OF THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

Over the last two years, we have worked closely together to face the unprecedented challenge of Covid-19. Health is a devolved matter, but viruses do not respect borders. We have shown that by working together as one United Kingdom with different layers of central, devolved, and local government, we can meet a challenge and deliver for the people we serve. The vaccine roll-out was the very essence of that spirit of collaboration. The UK Government acted for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in procuring vaccines in the international market at scale. In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive led the rollout, getting jabs into arms. This success should set the template for what we can achieve by working together in the future.

Talent is spread equally across our country; opportunity is not. Spatial disparities can be large, both between places and within them. Pockets of affluence and deprivation often coexist in the same district. Indeed, many of the areas of greatest deprivation are found in the most successful cities – that is as true in Glasgow as in Bristol, and in Swansea as in Belfast. Often, these differences have persisted for decades and under successive governments. This is a shared challenge across the United Kingdom, and I believe all levels of government should work together to meet it. No government – local, devolved, or central – has all the tools or all the answers to make our country a fairer and more prosperous place. No single level of government can achieve success on its own. The people we represent rightly expect us to work together.

Places that are thriving all have rich endowments of physical, human, intangible, financial, social, and institutional capital which create a virtuous circle of success. The drivers of this success benefit from both levers that are held by devolved government and UKG. Northern Ireland's great universities depend on decisions made in Belfast and Westminster. Businesses that give a livelihood to workers across the UK rely on services and follow regulations that are both devolved and reserved. No one I speak to in any part of the UK tells me that our constitutional settlement or political differences should be barriers to governments working together to deliver positive change – quite the reverse.

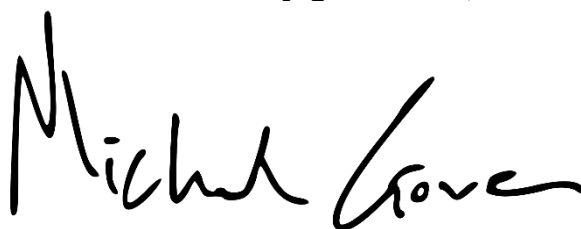
The white paper sets out areas in which the UK Government is leading on delivering policies to level up in all parts of the UK. These include our ambitions for gigabit broadband and 5G. They also include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for which we have today published guidance for local places can plan this additional investment. My officials will work with yours over the coming weeks to discuss how we might work together to deliver plans for the UKSPF launch later in the Spring, so we can make sure the funding is used in ways that deliver better outcomes for communities in Northern Ireland.

It is the nature of our interdependent United Kingdom that success in one sphere of policy depends on success in others. The white paper therefore sets out our ambitions for the United Kingdom in areas where success will require collaboration between the UK Government, the devolved governments and local government. The UK Government is ambitious for every citizen of our country. We want our young people to have the skills our 21st century economy needs, we want families across the UK to have the public services and housing they deserve to live happy and healthy lives, we want people who have worked hard all their lives to have the care and dignity they have earned in old age. Realising this depends on the pooling and sharing of risks and resources which is the hallmark of our common national life in the United Kingdom. It is a shared obligation between all layers of government. This is a fact that the devolved governments have long understood. In pursuing your policy ambitions, you do not allow the fact that a policy area is reserved to prevent you from expressing a view on it.

Devolution across the United Kingdom has been a success. From the smoking ban to plastic bag charges, administrations across the UK have learnt from each other and in many instances UK Government has often followed your lead. Devolution was intended to enable us to try different approaches and learn from each other's successes. I believe we can do much more to make that ambition a reality and so improve the lives of the people we serve. We therefore want to work with you and colleagues across the UK and beyond, in new and innovative ways, to share experiences, to analyse "what works" and so to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for everyone. We are open minded about exactly what institutional form this work might take and are keen to work with you and other colleagues on developing it. The intergovernmental relations structures established in the recently concluded Review of Intergovernmental Relations also provides us with an important new mechanism to co-ordinate collaborative work.

Whatever political differences we may have, I have a sincere personal respect for the leaders of each of the devolved governments and for the growing number of powerful metro-mayors, of whichever political party, which the UK Government has established and is establishing across England. To a man and woman, I believe they are in public life for the right reasons and want to improve the lives of the people they serve. This white paper is an invitation to join forces in the common good and to work together to overcome shared challenges. It is an invitation I hope you will accept, and I look forward to discussing this further with you once you have had time to consider the paper in detail.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

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