



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

# Intergovernmental Relations Annual Report

**Reporting period 1 January - 31 December 2021**

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

**March 2022**



**LEVELLING  
UP**



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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2021 in Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>IGR Highlights from 2021 – Case Studies</b>	<b>11</b>
1: UK-wide COVID-19 response	11
2: Together for our Planet: Delivering the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26	17
3: City and Growth Deals	21
4: British Irish Council	28
<b>Quarter 4 IGR activity (1 October - 31 December 2021)</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Parliamentary Activity</b>	<b>40</b>

# Foreword



As 2021 dawned the UK was still in the midst of a global pandemic. A pandemic that had brought the world to a halt in 2020 and was still requiring further lockdowns in early 2021. There was a continued threat to our public health, our economy, and our way of life.

But we still entered the new year with hope. In December 2020 the UK had become the first nation in the world to begin vaccinating our citizens against COVID-19. Now we are working hand in hand with the devolved governments to roll out the vaccine to every UK adult. It was to become an extraordinary logistical triumph as the UK Government bought and shared vaccines across every part of the UK and our respective health services got the needles into arms in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. A corner was being turned but a lot of hard work still lay ahead.



We couldn't have made such strides, and against such adversity, if we did this alone. Four governments united against a common threat, for a common goal, working together



We couldn't have made such strides, and against such adversity, if we did this alone. Four governments united against a common threat, for a common goal and worked together.

No single government has all the good ideas. We need to work together. Not only in the way that we faced up to COVID-19 together but in the way we joined forces to welcome the world to COP26 in Glasgow for a milestone event and set groundbreaking climate change goals. We worked together to extend opportunities to communities across the UK through our City and Growth Deals, reducing inequality and improving prosperity. When there was a need for urgent humanitarian assistance, this same close working was vital to ensuring Afghan refugees could resettle here as soon as possible.

This is how intergovernmental relations works - and as this Annual Report shows, it has been working. The report details the unprecedented amount of calls and meetings that have taken place between the governments.

And we will go further. Earlier this year, we saw the start of a new era in our partnership, with the publication of the Intergovernmental Relations Review. This is a landmark agreement, which cements the years of collaboration and encourages more for the benefit of future generations.

This Annual Report is just the foundation. It is testament to what can be achieved when we work together. I would like to thank all the Ministers and civil servants from all four governments for their collaborative efforts in 2021. There is more to do in 2022.

**The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**

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

# 2021 in Summary

2021 was a defining year for the UK, at home and abroad, especially in relation to the way in which the UK Government and the devolved administrations work together.

There were over 440 ministerial meetings between the UK Government and the devolved governments during 2021. These ministerial meetings are underpinned by engagement by the respective civil servants so that the meetings can be as productive as possible.

Open channels of communication have been the bedrock of the partnership between the governments of the four nations in our United Kingdom, allowing us to mount a coherent and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to tackle the many knock-on economic effects it has brought with it.



*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy Kate Forbes MSP, with Sir Ian Wood KT GBE, Opportunity North East Chairman at the construction of Aberdeen's new-build BioHub.*



*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy Kate Forbes MSP with Collette Cohen OBE, CEO Net Zero Technology Centre.*

Throughout the course of the pandemic, we have seen just what is possible when all four governments pull together in the same direction. Co-operation took place in a wide range of policy areas:

- Health Ministers and Chief Medical Officers from each government reaching a joint agreement to shorten the time between the second and third vaccination from six months to three months. This was essential to the success of the UK's vaccination programme.
- Close working relationships also secured agreement to follow the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in respect of the vaccination of 5 to 17 year olds.
- Working with the devolved governments on lockdown arrangements to deal with the Delta variant in early 2021.
- Transport Ministers from each nation regularly reviewing travel restrictions in order to protect people in the UK.
- The Chancellor and Chief Secretary of the Treasury working with their counterparts in the devolved governments to make sure that the appropriate funding was in place for us to support our health services, businesses and workers across the UK.



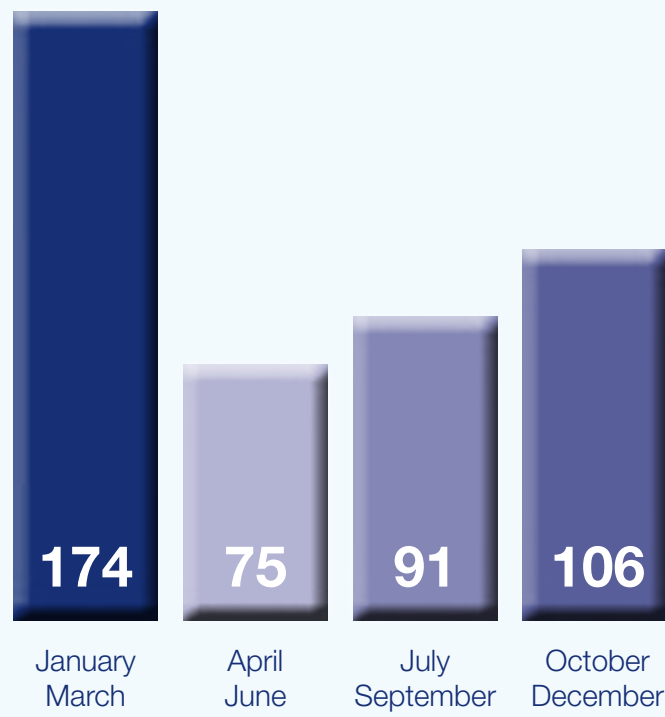
Throughout the course of the pandemic, we have seen just what is possible when all four governments pull together in the same direction



## 2021 in Numbers

In 2021 there were over **440** ministerial meetings between the UK Government and devolved governments in 2021.

### Number of meetings between the UK Government and Welsh Government, Scottish Government, or Northern Ireland Executive in 2021.



### Why did the number of meetings change each quarter?

- The highest number of meetings took place during January through to March when numerous policy areas required close collaboration between the four governments, such as the joint response to COVID-19 and the end of the Transition Period in the UK's exit from the European Union (EU).
- During April and May, the pre-election period ahead of the Scottish and Welsh Government elections on 8th May 2021 impacted ministerial availability and partly contributed to a drop in meetings.
- However, in the second half of the year the number of meetings increased, reflecting the movement towards major events such as COP26, which took place in November 2021.

<sup>1</sup>The data was collected through a proforma completed by departments. The analysis was quality assured by an independent analyst.



## Who does the UK Government meet with?

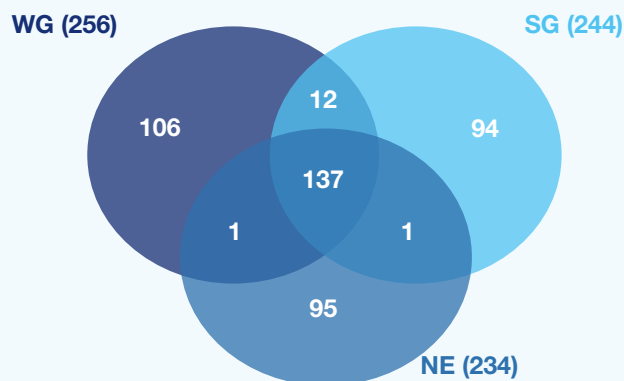
**Number of meetings between the UK Government (UKG) and Welsh Government (WG), Scottish Government (SG), or Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) in 2021 by quarter.**

Multilateral meetings are counted for each government section. The total of meetings in each quarter will sum to more than the total meetings in the period.



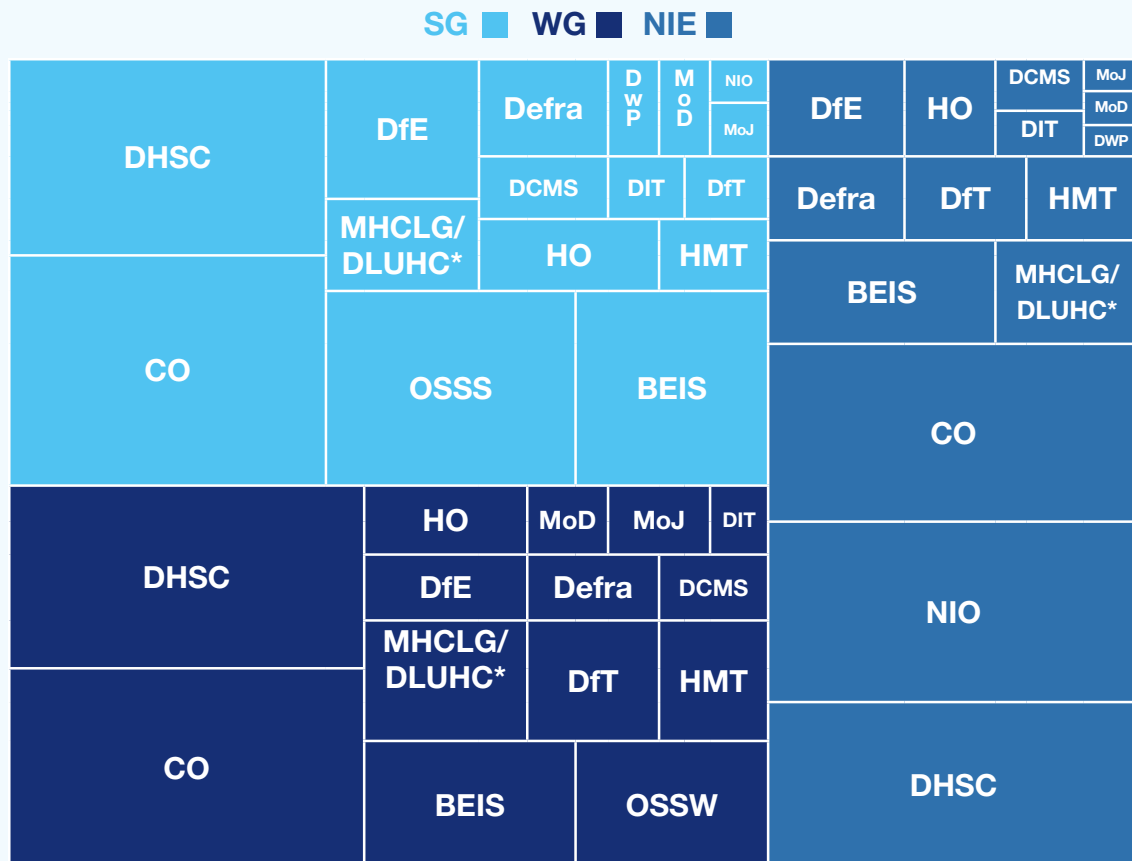
**Number of meetings between UK Government (UKG) AND Welsh Government (WG), Scottish Government (SG), or Northern Ireland Executive (NIE).**

All meetings also included UK Government. A total of 106 meetings took place only between UKG and WG. 12 between UKG, WG and SG.



## Meetings between UK Government departments and Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive in 2021.

Multilateral meetings are counted for each government section. The size of the block reflects the number of meetings.



\*Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) is now called Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The prominence of the Cabinet Office and DHSC reflects the focus in 2021 on coordination of the UK response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic.

# IGR Highlights from 2021 – Case Studies

## — CASE STUDY 1: UK-wide COVID-19 response

*For all four governments, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has obviously presented some of the greatest challenges in living memory. Public health is a devolved matter in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so many of the health measures taken in response to COVID-19 were applied at different times to reflect the unique circumstances in each nation.*

*At the same time, all four governments recognised the need for effective joint action and UK Government Ministers engaged regularly throughout the year with the heads of the devolved governments and other devolved administration ministers. Whilst the four governments may have taken different decisions and moved at different speeds to reflect their own circumstances, information was being shared and judgements made by respective ministers.*



*Prime Minister The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, with former First Minister of Northern Ireland Arlene Foster MLA.*

*Indeed, the former and current Secretaries of State for Health and Social Care met with health ministers from each of the devolved governments over 40 times in 2021, to share and discuss crucial data and find solutions to mutual problems. The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, supported by the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, met the heads of the devolved governments*

*at least fortnightly, though more often when needed. In December alone this group met five times, including COBR meetings held in response to the Omicron surge. This was supported 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 vaccine deployment, social care reform, supply of medical goods, and EU and trade policy.*

*At the very heart of the UK's COVID-19 response in 2021 was the rollout of the vaccine to every part of the UK. Once again, this highlighted the best of both worlds when it comes to devolution. The UK Government had taken steps to support vaccine development in the UK and also to purchase millions of vaccine doses from around the world. The UK was the first country in the world to start vaccinating our citizens in December 2020 and the UK Government bought and distributed these vaccines across the whole of the UK.*

*Once the vaccines arrived in the different parts of the UK, the devolved health services ensured that arrangements were in place to vaccinate everyone in each nation starting with the most vulnerable. It was a team effort. Data from 2021 shows that more than 100 million doses of the vaccine were administered across the UK and more than 100,000 lives were saved.*

*Alongside the vaccine programme, each administration developed step-by-step plans to ease COVID-19 restrictions when appropriate. The UK Government's roadmap was published in February 2021 and the devolved administrations set out their own separate plans recognising the importance of clarity for those who live and work in different parts of the UK.*



At the very heart of the UK's COVID-19 response in 2021 was the rollout of the vaccine to every part of the UK




## — COVID-19 Messaging

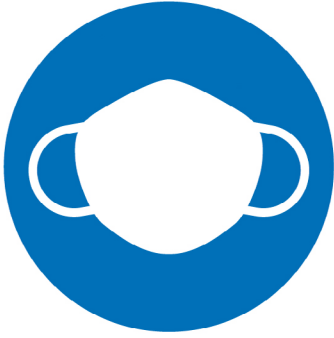
*Communications has played a central role throughout the pandemic, giving citizens and businesses the information, support and guidance they needed to keep themselves safe. Communication teams worked together to ensure information was clear and reached as many people as possible.*

*Officials in the Cabinet Office’s National Resilience Hub worked closely with the devolved governments to establish a network that operated in partnership to overcome the unprecedented challenges facing all four nations. Providing accurate and timely communications in all parts of the UK meant that the public were aware of the simple steps they needed to take to minimise the risk of infection. The universal recognition of the Hands, Face, Space messaging across the*

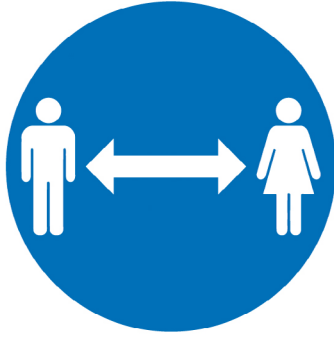





**HANDS**




**FACE**



**SPACE**



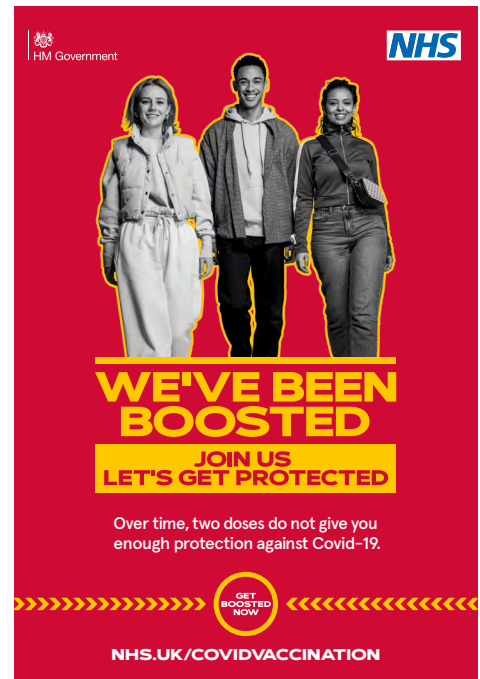
**FRESH AIR**



*UK being perhaps the most obvious example of effective cut-through. This was complemented by rolling COVID-19 communications owned by the devolved governments to reach as many people as possible in all parts of the UK.*

*A similar communications strategy was adopted to encourage people across the UK to get vaccinated and receive their booster shot. Frequent engagement between the four governments ensured that a successful marketing campaign was implemented at pace, raising awareness in all four nations of why, and how, to get vaccinated against COVID-19.*

*As a result of the successful vaccine roll-out, the UK has been able to reopen its economy and society again ahead of the UK Government's original schedule, marking the beginning of the country's long-term economic recovery from the pandemic.*



## Financial measures

*The UK Government took steps to provide financial support to workers and businesses in every part of the UK. COVID-19 has shown how the UK Government can work strategically and at scale to save jobs and support communities throughout the UK. The furlough scheme and the financial support for the self-employed were UK Government schemes that provided the same level of support to people in every part of the UK.*

*During the pandemic an unprecedented amount of financial support was made available to all parts of the UK. On top of UK-wide schemes such as furlough, the UK Government guaranteed an additional £16.8 billion for 2020-2021, so the devolved administrations had sufficient certainty to plan their response to COVID-19.*

*In 2021-2022 the devolved administrations are receiving £13.8 billion in additional funding through the Barnett formula. This means total block grants for 2021-2022 are £43.2 billion for the Scottish Government, £19.9 billion for the Welsh Government and £16.3 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive.*

*The Spending Review in 2021 is providing an additional £8.7 billion per year on average to the devolved administrations through the Barnett formula, on top of their annual £66 billion baseline.*

*The UK Government has taken significant measures to protect the economy, providing billions in support to individuals and businesses in all parts of the UK – protecting 1.7 million jobs in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.*



During the pandemic an unprecedented amount of financial support was made available to all parts of the UK



*Throughout the pandemic the UK Government has provided historic levels of support to the economy – a total of over £400 billion. It has provided financial support to people in need through the Universal Credit system, which has demonstrated its resilience and ability to manage large increases in applications. The UK Government has also protected, supported and created jobs across the country through its Plan for Jobs. Measures include over £2 billion for the Kickstart scheme to support young people into work.*



The response to the pandemic has shown we are at our strongest when we come together and work together as one United Kingdom. And together, through the strength of the UK, we will continue to focus efforts on recovering from the pandemic and achieving much more than we could have as individual nations





## — CASE STUDY 2: Together for our Planet: Delivering the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26

*The UK hosted the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November, bringing together almost 200 countries, 120 world leaders, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. As one of the biggest international events ever held in this country the stakes were high, but COP26 was one of 2021's real success stories thanks, in no small part, to the close partnership-working between the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the other devolved administrations in the run-up to, and during, the event itself.*



*First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon MSP, former First Minister of Northern Ireland Paul Givan MLA, Prime Minister The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford MS, and former deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland Michelle O'Neill MLA.*

*The UK's President-Designate, The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, worked closely with representatives to deliver the event. He convened the COP26 Devolved Administration Ministerial Group several times in 2021 to discuss and align the UK's objectives for COP26 and our collective efforts to lead the charge against climate change.*



*UN Secretary General António Guterres, COP26 President-Designate The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Edwin Poots MLA, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon MSP, and Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters MS.*

*These efforts formed part of two years of intense diplomacy and campaigning, which culminated in 197 Parties agreeing the historic Glasgow Climate Pact at the end of the summit. The level of ambition to tackle climate change has been raised – we now have net zero commitments from over 90% of the world's economy – up from 30% two years ago, when the UK took on the COP26 Presidency. The devolved administrations supported this landmark commitment and made a number of commitments during COP26. These vital actions will help ensure we meet our shared UK ambition of leading the fight against climate change.*



*The Prime Minister, together with the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, addressed leaders at a 'Welcome to Glasgow' breakfast reception on day two of the COP26 World Leaders Summit. The reception demonstrated UK-wide support and commitment to the summit and COP26 goals.*

*Joint working between UK Government and the devolved governments around COP26 delivered in a number of key areas:*

- **A safe, COVID-19 secure and in person COP26 event** in Glasgow, thanks to close working and regular meetings between the UK Government and the Scottish Government. This included meetings between the UK and Scottish Government ministers, officials, and medical officers, between senior police officers across the UK, and representatives from Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to discuss COVID-19 precautions and planning.

- **A UK-wide commitment to the two COP26 health initiatives of building climate-resilient and climate-sustainable health systems, as a result of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care meeting with devolved health ministers.**
- **Devolved government ministers taking part in numerous events and activities, running alongside the negotiations throughout the COP26 fortnight.** For example, as part of the UK Presidency Programme, and our hosting of the UK Pavilion, ministers from the Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive represented the British Irish Council at an event where ministers discussed decarbonisation and environmental policies.



The Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Action event, COP26 in Glasgow.

## — CASE STUDY 3: City and Growth Deals

*All governments within the UK share the aim of driving up economic growth and eradicating inequalities. The UK Government recognises that many of the best solutions to local problems are identified and delivered locally.*

*The UK Government has committed to levelling up the whole of the UK and to strengthening the United Kingdom, and City and Growth Deals in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are central to that aim. The Deals are long-term programmes made up of policy interventions and increased investment that target individual regions within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are agreed to by the UK Government, the devolved administrations, local authorities and other key public bodies. Each Deal shows the various different layers of government working together to achieve the right formula for growth, respecting devolved powers in each nation: boosting local employment and skills, supporting businesses and innovation, developing housing and investing in transport at a very localised level.*

- *There are nine Deals in Scotland in implementation including Borderlands and three in negotiation covering all parts of Scotland.*
- *In Wales, all four Deals are now live (following the signature of the Mid Wales Growth Deal in early January 2022).*
- *Northern Ireland's Belfast City Region Deal was signed on 15 December 2021, the first Deal to be signed in Northern Ireland. The Derry and Strabane City Deal signed Heads of Terms in February 2021. Two other Growth Deals are in development.*
- *The Borderlands Deal is providing UK Government funding in both southern Scotland and the northernmost part of England.*



*Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands Mairi Gougeon MSP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland Iain Stewart MP, and Professor Colin Campbell, Chief Executive of the James Hutton Institute break ground on the International Barley Hub and Advanced Plant Growth Centre at the James Hutton Institute, Scotland.*

## SCOTLAND

*The UK Government and the Scottish Government have agreed landmark investment deals for rural parts of Scotland and Northern England. Argyll and Bute is benefitting from £50 million of investment through the Rural Growth Deal. The Tay Cities Deal is channelling over £300 million of Government investment into growth-spurring, job-creating projects in Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross, and through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, over £350 million is being invested into five areas covering southern Scotland and Northern England.*

**The Tay Cities Deal** will deliver improved outcomes for the region's people, places, businesses, and communities by promoting inclusive growth, innovation, as well as physical and digital connectivity. December 2021 marked a year since the signing of the Deal document which signalled the beginning of a partnership between UK and Scottish governments, along with public and private organisations from across Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross, that will invest up to £700 million, which includes partner contributions, in projects promoting sustainable and inclusive prosperity for the region.

*More than £35 million has already been drawn down by the first partners to enter the delivery phase and swift progress has been made across several projects, with many already entering construction, opening to the public, or announcing new jobs for the region.*

*A total of 10 of the 26 named projects and programmes have been fully approved over the last 12 months, with many more to come in 2022 and beyond as the diverse range of work linked to the Deal continues to gather pace.*

- *In February, the 'Growing the Tay Cities Biomedical Cluster' project led by the University of Dundee was fully approved, as was funding to support the development of new routes at Dundee Airport.*
- *Significant progress has been made on the Perth Cultural Transformation project led by Perth & Kinross Council, with work to renovate Perth City Hall beginning in March, and in April, Dundee Heritage Trust's plans to transform Discovery Point gained approval.*

- *In May, the public got a first look at the new look Hospitalfield House gardens, fernery and glasshouse café in Arbroath, and a month later two projects that will bring high-speed broadband to rural areas in both Angus and Perth & Kinross local authority areas were fully approved.*
- *The James Hutton Institute enjoyed a landmark moment in August when ground was broken on its International Barley Hub and Advanced Plant Growth Centre.*
- *Abertay University then began construction work on its new ‘cyberQuarter’ cybersecurity research and development hub in September, announcing 30 jobs linked to the Deal as NHS National Services Scotland confirmed they would base cyber operations in Dundee.*
- *2021 was also the year that 5G got up and running in the region, with a range of activity and events linked to the Deal, including a Scotland 5G Hub being located in Dundee, the switch on of public 5G wi-fi in the city, and Esports Scotland staging their grand finals at Dundee Contemporary Arts centre, supported by an ultrafast 5G connection.*

**The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal** is a partnership with local authorities in Scotland and in England. It will deliver green growth and attract new businesses by:

- Investing in programmes which are designed to increase the vitality and sustainability of towns in the Borderlands area, raising its profile as a destination to visit, live and work.
- Progressing work to assess the benefits and challenges of extending the Borders Railway.
- Redeveloping Chaplecross power station as an employment site for low-carbon energy production, storage and distribution solutions.



Top: Cllr John Mallinson, Cllr Stewart Young, Cllr Elaine Murray, Cllr Glen Sanderson, Cllr Mark Rowley. Bottom: Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport Michael Matheson MSP, former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, and Under Secretary of State for Scotland Iain Stewart MP.





## £70 million Argyll and Bute Rural Growth Deal Heads of Terms agreement signed



#abgrowthdeal #abplace2b

*Cllr Robin Currie, former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport Michael Matheson MSP.*

**The Rural Growth Deal for Argyll and Bute** will make sure that investment takes advantage of existing regional strengths in tourism, food and farming, distilling and defence. The Deal will help further develop the area by:

- *Creating an international centre for excellence for aquaculture.*
- *Improve digital connectivity.*
- *Developing a hub for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles at Oban Airport.*

### NORTHERN IRELAND

**The Derry City and Strabane District Council City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund** is a hugely exciting opportunity which represents the largest ever single investment package into the area and will help the UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive and partners, contribute to the growth of a stronger, more resilient and more inclusive local economy. A total of £210 million has been secured through the City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund from the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive. An additional £40 million is also being contributed

*by the Derry City and Strabane District Council. The Heads of Terms for the Derry City and Strabane City Deal was signed on 24th February 2021, marking an important milestone in the delivery of this major investment in the North West.*

*The funds will be spent on a number of projects across the areas of innovation, digital, health, regeneration, tourism and renewal. These projects contribute to objectives set out in the City and District's inclusive strategic Growth Plan 2017-2032. This includes the delivery of:*

- The Ulster University Centre for Industrial Digitalisation Robotics and Automation (CIDRA) which is bringing one of the largest clusters of artificial intelligence researchers and will be an advanced support facility for local and international industry.*
- The Northern Ireland Graduate Entry Medical School and associated Transformation Healthcare Research Innovation Value Based Ecosystem (THRIVE) project which is a research-led, community and industry-facing facility focused on the health and life science industry.*
- The Digital Enabling Infrastructure Programme which will focus on improving connectivity across the city region.*
- The Strabane Town Centre Regeneration Programme aims to revitalise the historic town through the creation of physical infrastructure, such as a primary health care hub, a leisure centre and improved connections to public transport.*

*Along with expanding three world-class centres of innovation excellence currently operating in the City and the provision of skills and employability programmes, the City Deal will deliver higher paid jobs and help create a more regionally-balanced economy over the coming years.*

## WALES

*In 2017, the UK and Welsh governments signed off on the **Swansea Bay City Deal**, worth a total of £1.3 billion. It has already seen multiple benefits to the Swansea Bay City Region such as the construction of a 3,500-capacity indoor arena in Swansea which is due to open in 2022.*

*The Swansea Bay City Deal will also fund:*

- The Pembroke Dock Marine programme which will deliver the facilities, services and spaces needed to establish a world-class centre for marine engineering.*
- The delivery of initiatives across two sites (Swansea University's Singleton campus and Morriston Hospital also in Swansea) that add value to the regional life science, health and sport sectors in the Swansea Bay City Region.*
- Projects aimed at supporting the decarbonisation of the steel and metals industry with a focus on the Port Talbot Waterfront Harbourside area.*

*The deal will provide a regional economic boost of up to £1.8 billion and create 9,000 additional jobs and has already seen multiple benefits to the Swansea Bay City Region such as the construction of a 3,500-capacity indoor arena in Swansea which opened in March 2022.*



In 2017, the UK and Welsh governments signed off on the Swansea Bay City Deal, worth a total of £1.3 billion



## — CASE STUDY 4: British Irish Council

*“To promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands” is the defining purpose of the British Irish Council (BIC), set up as part of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. This ambition is as much of a focus today as it was when the Council was founded in 1999 and helps to guide the UK Government’s approach to intergovernmental cooperation.*

*Through twice yearly summits and engagement of 11 policy-based work sectors, ministers and officials from the eight Member Administrations (UK and Irish governments, the devolved governments and the governments of the Crown Dependencies Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man) are able to share information, discuss and consult on shared challenges and interests, and coalesce around action and priorities. For 2021 that central priority was tackling the climate emergency, and our unwavering commitment to achieving net zero. Member Administrations agreed to an intensive programme of decarbonisation to meet these targets and two of the policy-based work sectors – transport and energy - are particularly focused on the efforts to deliver on our climate targets.*



*Deputy Chief Minister Jane Poole-Wilson MHK, Minister for the Department of Communities Deirdre Hargey MLA, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, Chief Minister Senator John Le Fondré, and Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Edwin Poots MLA. Photo credit: Welsh Government.*



*Ministers at the Transport Work Sector meeting of the British Irish Council, October 2021.*

## Transport Work Sector

*The transport work sector met four times in 2021 to discuss transport decarbonisation. Member Administrations identified several shared approaches and ambitions including the development and deployment of zero emission buses, highlighting the trials and procurement taking place across several administrations and its manufacturing potential. One example was the Ballymena-based Wrightbus' provision of zero emission buses which will replace Derry City's entire urban bus fleet with zero emission buses by 2023.*

*Wrightbus was also granted £11.2 million of UK Government funding in March 2021 to manufacture low-cost hydrogen fuel cell technology for buses and create a hydrogen centre of excellence.*

*In October 2021, Nichola Mallon MLA, Minister for Infrastructure in the Northern Ireland Executive, chaired a meeting of ministers from all Member Administrations in Belfast. Ministers agreed a three-year forward work plan for the Transport work sector. The plan identifies three key areas of focus for the work sector for the next three years and will support all administrations' efforts on reducing emissions from transport and capturing the host of co-benefits:*

- *Modal shift.*
- *Decarbonisation of public sector transport.*
- *Decarbonisation of the freight fleet.*

*Member Administrations committed to sharing information, jointly identifying shared challenges and innovative solutions, on-the-ground visits and experience of differing responses and delivery of a summary report setting out the group's findings by 2025.*

**The British-Irish Council (BIC) held its 35th Summit meeting on 11 June 2021** hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive. Ministers discussed the impact of COVID-19 across Member Administrations, and reflected on approaches to recovery that were sustainable and which addressed the potentially long-lasting economic and societal impacts. The Council discussed areas of common ground across Member Administrations when it comes to recovery, and in planning for potential future impacts of COVID-19.

Ministers also discussed the latest political developments across their areas, and highlighted the recent elections held across a number of administrations. Ministers provided an update and engaged on a number of topics of mutual interest, including the EU-UK relationship.



Secretary of State for Wales The Rt Hon Simon Hart MP, Deputy Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Jane Poole-Wilson MHK, First Minister for Wales Mark Drakeford MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language Jeremy Miles MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy Kate Forbes MSP, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon MSP, and Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD (Irish Prime Minister).

**The 36th Summit of the British-Irish Council** was hosted by the Welsh Government in November 2021. Ministers took the opportunity to engage on a number of topics of mutual interest including the economy, trade, ongoing relations with the EU and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26).

Ministers at the Summit discussed the continued impact of COVID-19 and the progress of various post-pandemic recovery programmes and Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages (IML) and Early Years Policy. In advance of the Summit meeting, ministers with particular responsibility for IML languages met to discuss IML language acquisition in the early years. The Council held a further discussion on IML Languages and Early Years Policy during the Summit meeting to reflect on the challenges and the opportunities that come with policy approaches in this area. The Council also took the opportunity to discuss the recent efforts of the Council across all of its work sectors and to take note of the ongoing collaborative work being carried out by officials.

# Quarter 4 IGR activity (1 October - 31 December 2021)

The last three months of 2021 saw a continued increase in engagement between the UK Government and devolved administrations across several key policy areas.

## — COVID-19 recovery

The collective priority for all governments in recent months has been responding to, and recovering from, the myriad challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is collective agreement that the full focus must be on working together to get people back into work, businesses back on their feet and the economy firing on all cylinders again. This work has been undertaken across all levels of government. Some examples from the last quarter alone include:

- The Interministerial Group on Tourism met in November to discuss the sector's recovery across all parts of the UK. Each administration updated on the COVID-19 recovery measures in place. The finance ministers also discussed their plans for economic recovery and job creation.



Chancellor of the Exchequer The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP.

- The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industry Strategy, visited Belfast to discuss the economic recovery with Northern Ireland Executive ministers.
- Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker MP and the Scottish Government shared their education priorities whilst attending OECD's annual International Summit of the Teaching Profession (ISTP) in October.
- The Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, also discussed the effects of COVID-19 on the higher education sector with Welsh and Scottish Government colleagues in December.

### Delivering net zero

Climate change is a challenge shared across the UK and our commitment to tackling it unites our governments.

- The UK Government published its Net Zero Strategy on 19 October, setting out landmark policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet our net zero target by 2050.
- The Net Zero Interministerial Group met in November and focused on the UK Emissions Trading Scheme Consultation.
- Ministers at the Interministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs discussed climate adaptation and reflected on the outcomes of COP26, such as the declaration on forests and land use and the Global Methane Pledge which the UK signed up to. Ministers from the UK Government and devolved administrations agreed to continue to collaborate and share good practice on climate adaptation and for officials to identify further opportunities for collaboration between the UK and devolved governments.
- With heat strategy being such an important part of cutting emissions, Lord Callanan the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, specifically met with the Scottish Government to discuss heat networks and mechanisms for low-carbon heat deployment.



- The North Sea Transition Forum met in November, providing ministers from the Department for International Trade, Office for Secretary of State for Scotland and Scottish Government with the opportunity to engage with key stakeholders to discuss the North Sea Transition Deal and industry engagement.

## — Sir Peter Hendy CBE's Connectivity Review

At the heart of the UK Government's transport agenda lies an objective to improve connectivity between Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England, to connect businesses and communities faster than ever before.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE published his Review on 26 November 2021, setting out recommendations to improve transport connectivity across the UK. On the day of publication, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Baroness Vere of Norbiton held meetings with her ministerial counterparts from the devolved administrations to discuss the Review and how to boost transport connectivity in all parts of the country.



Prime Minister The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP and Sir Peter Hendy CBE.

## — Delivering cultural programmes across the UK

As we rebuild after the pandemic, investing in and supporting cultural programmes has never been more of a priority for governments across the UK.

### UK City Of Culture 2025

On 8 October, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport The Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP announced the places long-listed for the prestigious UK City of Culture 2025 title, which included Wrexham County Borough in Wales. The winner will be announced in 2022 and will be at the centre of the UK's cultural spotlight in 2025.



### Unboxed: Creativity in the UK

October also saw the launch of Unboxed: Creativity in the UK, a UK-wide creative programme, delivered in partnership by the UK Government and the devolved governments. It features 10 ground-breaking commissions which will take place at over 80 live sites across the UK, and digitally, to bring people together and showcase UK creativity globally.



### Sport

The UK Government is investing £4 million in 2021 in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to upgrade grassroots football and multi-sport provision, working in close partnership with the Football Associations to ensure those areas most in need can benefit. The Minister for Sport, Nigel Huddleston MP, discussed the improvement of grassroots facilities across the UK with the devolved governments in October and November. At the annual Sports Cabinet meeting they talked about COVID-19 recovery and the UK Budget implications for sport across the Home Nations. This included a discussion on vital investment in grassroots sports facilities across the UK, in support of a potential UK and Ireland bid for the FIFA World Cup 2030, and the subsequent decision to change focus to bid for the UEFA European Championships in 2028. There has been ongoing senior official level engagement, following the announcement of HMT funding in the spending review, regarding the bid to host the Tour de France Grand Départ 2026 with stages across Scotland, England and Wales.

## Business and industry

The skills shortage of drivers for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) disrupted the lives of many people and businesses across the UK, and tackling this problem became a collective priority for governments across the UK. As a result, the Scottish Government Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise Ivan McKee MSP addressed HGV driver shortages at October's Interministerial Group, as well as covering employability, labour market conditions, and public procurement, as well as the Subsidy Control Bill.

As part of the Interministerial Group's shift in focus from COVID-19 towards economic recovery and prosperity, in December Gordon Lyons MLA, gave an overview of Northern Ireland's Economic Vision, including the 10x Economy Strategy and the accompanying Skills Strategy. The Group also considered the challenges faced by specific sectors of the economy as a result of COVID-19 and how these could be mitigated to facilitate businesses' economic recovery.

More jobs for local people, more inward investment for businesses and vital infrastructure, plus more opportunities for a green recovery and global trade – this is at the heart of the UK and devolved governments' plans to extend the Freeport programme across the UK. A positive first step was made towards sharing the benefits of Freeports in Wales, when the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and the Welsh Minister for the Economy, Vaughan Gething MS, held a dedicated meeting on Freeports.

Following the inauguration of the Scottish Seafood Industry Action Group in August, the UK Government and Scottish Government participated in two further meetings of the group in October and November to discuss a range of issues of interest to the sector in Scotland, such as changes to Animal Health Regulations and access to labour from outside the UK.



The UK Government is committed to ensuring that individuals' opportunities are not determined by the area in which they live



## — Safety and Security

As part of a weeklong visit to Scotland, the UK Government's Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, Baroness Goldie DL, and Scottish Government Minister Keith Brown MSP, committed to continuing work to ensure that defence makes a meaningful contribution to the people of Scotland. While there, Baroness Goldie engaged with those working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and defence to discuss how the Ministry of Defence and UK Armed Forces can continue to deliver for the people of Scotland.

The Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, Kevin Foster MP, met with Angus Robertson MSP, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for External Affairs, to discuss developments in the UK's immigration system including the points-based system, youth mobility, EU Settlement scheme and the permit festival system.

At the Policing Partnership Board for Wales in December, chaired by the Welsh Government, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales David T C Davies MP, joined discussions on improving the safety of women and girls in Wales.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs published the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan, detailing how we will deliver for veterans over coming years. This work is being delivered UK-wide and includes addressing issues of diversity and inclusion and challenges unique to non-UK veterans.

The UK Government is committed to ensuring that individuals' opportunities are not determined by the area in which they live. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Lord Wolfson of Tredegar QC met Welsh Government ministers to discuss funding requirements for a replacement building of the Cardiff Justice Centre, Welsh Government's expression of interest to pilot a domestic abuse focussed Problem Solving Court in Merthyr Tydfill, and legal aid access in England and Wales.

## International issues

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO)'s diplomatic network collaborated with civil servants across the UK to deliver successful devolved ministerial visits to the Dubai Expo 2020, and to Iceland.

The Board of Trade took place in Northern Ireland, fulfilling a commitment made in the Northern Ireland 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement. The Secretary of State for International Trade had a further meeting with the Minister for the Economy in the Northern Ireland Executive, Gordon Lyons MLA. The New Zealand Free Trade Agreement was then discussed with devolved ministers in October and November, providing updates regarding an agreement in principle.

The UK Government is working with partners in the devolved governments and local government to support Afghan evacuees. UK and Scottish Government civil servants have held a series of meetings to share good practice on devolved policy issues of mutual interest for the effective delivery of Afghan resettlement efforts, such as community engagement and integration. The Scottish Government runs a Community Engagement Group to support the Voluntary Community Sector Organisations who are working to welcome people from Afghanistan and helping them to settle in their new communities in Scotland.



Minister of State for Northern Ireland Conor Burns MP, Crawford Faulkner, Chief Trade Negotiation Adviser, Northern Ireland Economy Minister Gordon Lyons MLA, and Secretary of State for International Development Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP.

## Health and welfare

In October, the Minister for Crime and Policing, Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP, chaired a second UK Drugs Ministerial meeting in Belfast to discuss the issues of drug misuse across the UK. Ministers had an important discussion on cutting off supply routes for drugs, effective treatment and recovery systems, and how to end county lines networks – where vulnerable children and adults are exploited by organised crime gangs to transport drugs and cash.

## Wider ways of working

Collaborative working between governments on matters relating to elections is key given the need to ensure elections work well across the UK. The Interministerial Group for Elections and Registration met in November to ensure continued progress on electoral reform, legislation, and plans for future polls.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Scotland), Iain Stewart MP, met with the Scottish Government's Minister for Parliamentary Business, George Adam MSP in November to discuss the Scotland Act Order Programme which helps the devolution settlement continue to function smoothly.

As part of the Common Frameworks programme, all ministers endorsed proposals regarding exclusions from the UK Internal Market (UKIM) Act, the Northern Ireland protocol, and International Relations. Following this meeting, the government published a process for considering UKIM Act exclusions in Common Framework areas, and together with the devolved administrations, 10 further provisional

Common Frameworks have been published with more expected in 2022.

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved significant social security powers for benefits worth around £3bn to the Scottish Parliament. The implementation of



Collaborative working between governments on matters relating to elections is key given the need to ensure elections work well across the UK



these – including the significant transfer of existing disability benefit claimants in Scotland – is facilitated through close joint working between both Governments. The Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare (JMWGW) was set up to oversee implementation of the relevant provisions of the Scotland Act 2016 and is attended by ministers from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, DWP and the Scottish Government on a biannual basis. The JMWGW last met on 2 November 2021 where, amongst other matters, the delivery of the Scottish Government’s new Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and the extension of Scottish Child Payment was discussed.

## — Finance

Finance Ministers’ Quadrilateral meeting took place in October 2021. Finance ministers from the devolved governments had the opportunity to feed in their views on the upcoming Spending Review, they also discussed Net Zero, and our long-term economic recovery from the pandemic with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury also met finance ministers from the devolved governments separately, covering topics including the scope of the independent report to inform the review of the Scottish Government’s Fiscal Framework, decarbonisation, research and development funding, and the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.



Chancellor of the Exchequer The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP.

# Parliamentary Activity

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## — UK Government appearances before Select Committees

Throughout 2021 the UK Government upheld its commitment to deliver strong and transparent Parliamentary relations with ministers regularly appearing before Select Committees. Ministers attending these Committees covered a huge range of topics that required close intergovernmental working such as the various Select Committees on Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Ireland Affairs.

### **Scottish Affairs Committee:**

- The Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Alister Jack MP, appeared before the Committee in May and December 2021 where he discussed various issues, including the COVID-19 response, the UK Internal Market Act and City and Growth Deals.
- The Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart MP, gave evidence during a session on the Universities and Scotland in February 2021 before completing a session on the City and Region Growth Deals in September 2021.
- In March 2021, Minister for Welfare Delivery Will Quince MP and Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson MP gave evidence on welfare delivery in Scotland.
- In June 2021 the former Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, attended a Scottish Affairs committee non-enquiry session into COP26, and in July 2021, gave evidence on renewable energy in Scotland.
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Duguid MP gave evidence to the enquiry on fisheries in Scotland in April.
- The Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Alister Jack MP, also appeared before the Committee in May and December 2021 giving evidence on various issues of concern throughout the year.



### Welsh Affairs Committee:

- In April 2021, the former Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP attended a Welsh committee session as part of the committee's inquiry into Renewable Energy in Wales.
- In November 2021, the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets Paul Scully MP and the Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP, both gave evidence to a one off session on issues in the Welsh labour market.
- The Minister for Welfare Delivery at the Department for Work and Pensions, David Rutley MP, gave evidence to an inquiry on the Benefits System in Wales in December 2021.



*First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford MS, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs Michael Gove MP, and Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Edwin Poots MLA at the British Irish Council, Cardiff.*

- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Wales Office, David T C Davies MP, appeared before the Committee with Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government Luke Hall MP, during a one-off session on the Levelling-up and Community Renewal funds in May 2021.
- In July 2021, the Minister of State for Trade Policy Greg Hands MP appeared before the Committee to give evidence on the implications of the UK/Australia Free Trade Agreement for Wales.
- The Secretary of State for Wales The Rt Hon Simon Hart made five appearances before the Committee during 2021, giving evidence on Welsh freeports, the future of Air Passenger Duty and on other topical issues of concern throughout the year.

### **Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee:**

- In June 2021, the former Minister of State for the Cabinet Office Lord David Frost CMG, gave evidence to the Committee on Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol. Lord Frost also appeared before the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee in July 2021 to give evidence on the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.
- The Minister of State at Northern Ireland Office, Robin Walker MP, gave evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in May, on citizenship and passport processes in Northern Ireland alongside the Minister for Future Borders and Immigration Kevin Foster MP, who also gave further evidence to the committee in December on UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area.
- The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP gave evidence to the committee in October, on the UK Government's New Proposals to address the legacy of Northern Ireland's past.

### **Ministers from the Cabinet Office have appeared several times before the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee:**

- In February 2021, The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, the former Paymaster General gave evidence at a session on Data Transparency in relation to COVID-19,
- In March 202, Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office, Julie Lopez MP gave evidence at a session on Common Frameworks to ensure powers returned from exiting the EU are being applied to the benefit of citizens across the UK.

- The former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP appeared before the committee in May to give evidence on The Dunlop Review and the UK Government's union capability. He also gave evidence at a further session in the same month on COVID-19 Vaccine Certification to promote consistent messaging on COVID-19 across the UK.
- In June 2021, the then Minister for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith MP, gave evidence on the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill and in September gave further evidence on the Elections Bill, which seeks to modernise elections and bolster the strength of the UK's democracy.

### **House of Lords, Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee:**

- In September 2021, the Secretary of State for the Department of Food and Rural Affairs, The Rt Hon George Eustice MP, gave evidence to the committee on the UK Common Frameworks that fall into the EFRA policy portfolio.
- In July 2021, Chloe Smith MP, in her role as Minister for Constitution and Devolution provided evidence to the committee on the continued progress across the UK Common Frameworks programme.
- In June 2021, Territorial Office Ministers gave evidence to the committee on the role of the Territorial offices during the development of UK Common Frameworks. Ministers to provide evidence included: Robin Walker MP as Minister of State at Northern Ireland Office; Iain Stewart MP as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Scotland Office; and David T.C. Davies MP as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Wales Office.
- In February 2021, Minister for Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith MP, gave evidence on the UK Common Frameworks programme.

## Legislative Consent Motions

The UK Government is committed to the Sewel Convention and the procedures required when to seek consent from the devolved legislatures, as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding and Devolution Guidance Notes (DGNs).

We continue to proactively seek legislative consent from the devolved legislatures when introducing Bills at Westminster which seek to legislate within areas of devolved competence. In 2021, a total of 19 Legislative Consent Motions (LCMs) were collectively passed by the devolved legislatures, on the advice of their devolved administrations; this number stretched across Bills introduced in the two legislative sessions of Parliament. Seven of these LCMs were passed in the months January to May 2021, the remaining 12 in the months May to December 2021.

**Annex A** - Glossary of abbreviations for UK Government Departments

<b>BEIS</b>	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>CO</b>	Cabinet Office	<b>HMT</b>	Her Majesty's Treasury
<b>DCMS</b>	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	<b>HO</b>	Home Office
<b>DEFRA</b>	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education	<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>DfT</b>	Department for Transport	<b>NIO</b>	Northern Ireland Office
<b>DHSC</b>	Department of Health and Social Care	<b>OSSS</b>	Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland
<b>DIT</b>	Department for International Trade	<b>OSSW</b>	Office of the Secretary of State for Wales
<b>DLUHC</b> (formerly <b>MHCLG</b> )	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government)		

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