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Dear Clare,

It was a pleasure to meet with the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on 17 November, during which I undertook to provide a status update on the Common Frameworks programme, which I attach.

While I regret that the programme is not yet fully implemented, 27 frameworks are provisionally operational, and 1 is fully operational. These frameworks are being used right now to facilitate close working between the governments party to them, to ensure interoperability of policies and regulations and where desired, agree common goals and approaches, recognising devolved governments' decision-making powers and the specific needs of each part of the UK.

You will be aware that the devolved governments were keen to wait until after the UK government's review of the UK Internal Market Act 2020, before committing to ministerial sign off of some frameworks. I am pleased that all four governments have subsequently agreed that approximately half of the programme can now be signed off by ministers and look forward to rapid progress in the new year. The UK government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive have agreed not to progress the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Common Framework at this stage, which would reduce the total number of Frameworks to 30, pending agreement of Welsh ministers.

I remain of the view that all frameworks should receive ministerial sign off from all relevant governments as soon as possible. The UK government is continuing to work with the devolved governments to finalise as many Frameworks as possible in the first quarter of 2026. My officials will also propose alternative arrangements to publish the Framework Outline Agreement (FOAs) for those frameworks which are provisionally operational and report on what those Frameworks are discussing.

I include a full update at annex A which sets out the current status of each framework as we work with all the parties to the Common Frameworks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping line extending from the end of the "s" in "Chris" towards the right.

Chris Ward MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

Annex A - Current status of each common framework

Of the 30 Common Frameworks in the programme:

Five of the Common Frameworks are bi-lateral between the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. Of these, four transport related Frameworks are awaiting final approval by NIE. The remaining Common Framework is currently being reviewed and updated by policy officials from both governments. These Frameworks are:

- Commercial Transport Operator Licensing
- Driver Licensing
- Motor Insurance
- Rail Technical Standards (interoperability)
- Company Law

25 Frameworks in the programme are the joint responsibility of the four governments of the United Kingdom.

One Common Framework, Hazardous Substances (planning), is fully implemented and was published as a finalised Framework in August 2021.

Ten Frameworks have been scrutinised by all legislatures, revised, agreed at official-level and are ready to be progressed for publication. These are:

- Public Procurement
- Radioactive Substances
- Fertiliser Regulations
- Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene
- Plant Health
- Plant Varieties and Seeds
- Animal Health and Welfare
- Public Health and Public Health Security
- Food Compositional Standards and Labelling
- Nutrition-related Labelling, Composition and Standards

Eight Common Frameworks have been scrutinised by all legislatures and are being reviewed and updated by policy officials from each government. These are:

- Chemicals and Pesticides
- Blood Safety and Quality
- Organs, Tissues and Cells
- Late Payment
- Agricultural Support
- Emissions Trading Scheme
- Fisheries Management and Support
- Organic Production

Four Common Frameworks have not completed the scrutiny process through all four legislatures. This means officials are as yet unable to commence work to review and update them. These are:

- Best Available Techniques
- Ozone-depleting Substances and F-Gases

- Air Quality
- Resources and Waste

Two proposed Common Frameworks have completed development and have been agreed at official-level. They are ready to be progressed to publication for the scrutiny of each legislature as provisional Common Frameworks. These are:

- Zootech
- Provision of Services Regulations