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David Rees AM
Chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
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3 September 2018

Thank you for your letter dated 19 July regarding the Ministerial Forum (EU Negotiations). I understand you discussed this with the Minister for Housing and Regeneration at the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee on 2 July 2018.

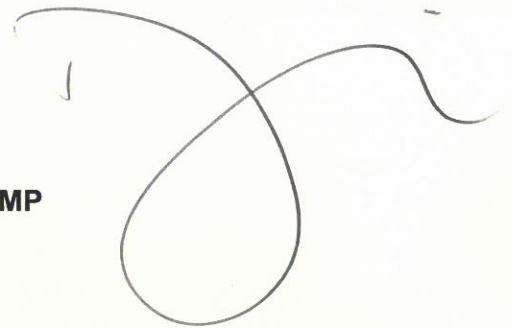
Building on discussions at the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations (JMC (EN)), the Ministerial Forum on EU Negotiations (MF(EN)) has been established to ensure the devolved administrations have increased opportunity to contribute to the development of the UK negotiating position in greater breadth and depth. Officials from the UK Government, Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Civil Service make up the joint secretariat for the Ministerial Forum. As the Minister for Housing and Regeneration mentioned at the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee on 2 July our officials work together to jointly agree the logistics, operations, papers and agenda items for the Ministerial Forum.

The third Ministerial Forum (EU Negotiations) was hosted by the Welsh Government in Cardiff on 1 August 2018. There was a constructive discussion on the role of the Ministerial Forum in supporting negotiations on the future relationship with the EU. There was also a useful discussion on Open and Fair Competition, on which there was a good deal of common ground, including with regard to the UK Government's vision for an economic partnership that includes a common rulebook for goods including agri-food.

As Chair of JMC(EN) I have had productive conversations with Ministers from the devolved administrations and I look forward to moving to a more frequent cycle of engagement from September. The Ministerial Forum will continue to meet regularly and the timing of meetings will need to be flexible to the emerging structure and sequencing of negotiations.

With regard to the sharing of negotiation texts and communications, which I appreciate is a concern of the Welsh Government, we will always endeavour to provide the DAs with early sight and the opportunity to provide meaningful comment. We were pleased to have been able to share specific sections of the Future Relationship White Paper with the DAs in advance of publication. We were grateful for the comments received on these sections, as well as the wider contributions on the broader content of the Future Relationship White Paper. Ministers were also able to discuss the proposals for the Withdrawal Agreement Bill at JMC (EN) on 5 July, significantly in advance of publication, due to earlier information we were able to share.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for Housing and Regeneration and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance in the Welsh Government.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a final flourish.A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a prominent loop and a long, sweeping tail.

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP