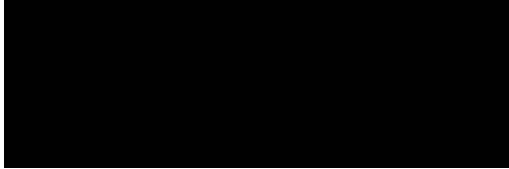


Stormont Castle
BELFAST
BT4 3TT



Michael Potter
Committee for TEO
Room 412
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR

28 July 2021

Dear Michael

Correspondence – Timelines for approval of the Peace Plus Programme

Further to the correspondence from Michael Potter of 24 June regarding the Peace Plus Programme please find attached (Annex A) further details of the procedural steps necessary to facilitate final approval of the Programme.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister recognise the importance of the Peace Plus Programme in supporting the Executive's priorities and are keen to ensure that the new Programme is in place at an early point.

Approval for the draft Programme is taken forward sequentially with key stakeholders which include the Executive, the Irish Government, the North South Ministerial Council and the EU Commission. A Financing Agreement is required between the British Government and the EU to formalise the legal, financial and governance framework for the PEACE PLUS programme. NIO is the lead Whitehall department for this area.

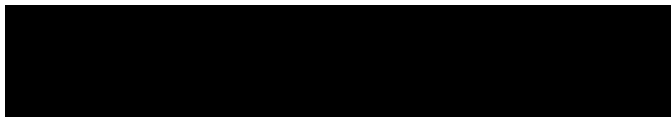
While The Executive Office has not as yet received the draft Programme, Ministers are keen to ensure that when received it is brought to the Executive at the earliest

opportunity for consideration and approval. This will facilitate the next stage of approval by the North South Ministerial Council. The NSMC joint secretariat are aware of the requirement for NSMC to approve the Co-operation programme document and will make arrangements to facilitate the NSMC approval when the Executive and Irish Government approvals have been obtained.

We understand that the Finance Minister is aware of the importance of early approval and DoF officials are working in close collaboration with counterparts in DPER the SEUPB and the NIO to ensure the Programme will be submitted to the Executive at the earliest opportunity. Some further information on the approval process is attached at Annex A.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

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Details of the steps being taken to ensure the PEACE Plus programme is approved as quickly as possible

At its meeting of the 23 June 2021, the Committee for the Executive Office considered correspondence from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) in respect of the timeline for the approval of the PEACE PLUS Programme. The Committee subsequently wrote to the Department seeking further information about the timescale for approval.

The Department of Finance (DoF) and its co-sponsor department in ROI, the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), are responsible for seeking approvals for the PEACE Plus programme also referred to as the Co-operation programme document.

The SEUPB are in the final stages of developing the Co-operation programme document. Once the SEUPB have provided a final draft of programme to the DoF they will engage further with NI departments to ensure departments are content with their priority areas and amounts allocated. The draft programme will then go to The Executive and the Irish Government for approval.

The Finance Minister is aware of the importance of early approval and DoF officials are working in close collaboration with counterparts in DPER the SEUPB and the NIO to ensure the Programme will be submitted to the Executive at the earliest opportunity. When received TEO officials will seek to ensure the draft Programme is brought to the attention of Ministers for consideration to enable early consideration by the Executive.

When the Co-operation programme document has been approved by the Executive and the Irish Government, the North South Ministerial (NSMC) will be asked for approval. The NSMC joint secretariat are aware of the requirement for NSMC to approve the Co-operation programme document and will make arrangements to facilitate the NSMC approval when the Executive and Irish Government approvals have been obtained.

When NSMC approval has been obtained the Co-operation programme document will then be sent to the EU Commission for final approval.

The DoF has advised that the current timetable is for the Co-operation programme

document to be submitted to the EU Commission during the summer with the Programme to open for some funding calls in the autumn. However given the complex framework of approvals and requirements for the programme, these indicative dates are subject to change.

Early approval of the programme will help to minimise any gaps in funding between PEACE and PEACE Plus. It should however be noted that PEACE IV and PEACE Plus are standalone programmes and that SEUPB has acknowledged that there will be a gap in funding for projects that conclude prior to PEACE Plus launching. It should also be noted that there is no guarantee that those who received funding from the PEACE IV programme will receive funding from PEACE Plus. TEO officials are working with SEUPB to mitigate any risks where this is possible.



Committee for the Executive Office

David McCreedy
Communications and Executive Support
SD20
Stormont Castle
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3TT

24 June 2021

Dear David,

PEACE PLUS PROGRAMME

At its meeting on 23 June 2021, the Committee for the Executive Office considered correspondence from the Special EU Programmes Body providing the Committee with a timeline for the approval of the PEACE PLUS Programme.

The Committee agreed that I should write to you to ask that you ensure that the proposals for the PEACE PLUS Programme are submitted for approval by the North South Ministerial Council without delay.

The Committee also urges the Executive to carry out its approval process for the programme expediently to ensure there is no gap between PEACE IV and PEACE PLUS funding.

I would appreciate a response by **8 July 2021**.

Yours sincerely

Michael Potter

Michael Potter Clerk, Committee for the Executive Office