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**Colin McGrath, MLA**  
Committee for the Executive Office  
Room 375a  
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25th November 2020

Dear Colin,

Thank you for your letter of 6 November regarding evidence provided by Northern Ireland local councils on EU Exit. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of State.

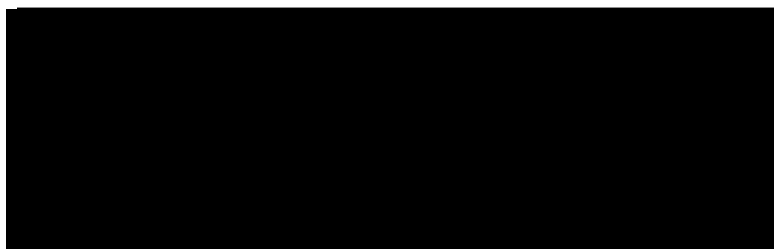
We are fully committed to engaging across Northern Ireland to ensure people's concerns are heard and to discuss how preparations can be strengthened as the transition period comes to a close. This includes of course engaging with local authorities.

The Northern Ireland Office answered Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's letter on 3 September and offered to provide clarity on any further questions they had around aspects of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Officials from the Northern Ireland Office also met the Chief Executive of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on 22 October as part of regular engagement with local councils in Northern Ireland and explained the complexities around UK Government officials attending council meetings. We encouraged the Chief Executive to pass on any questions emerging from the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Brexit Committee to the Northern Ireland Office.

In addition, the Secretary of State spoke with Solace NI representatives in June about transition readiness. The Northern Ireland Office also engaged with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and SOLACE NI on 17 September and 10 November, respectively, to discuss preparations for the end of the transition period. These have been valuable opportunities to engage across civic society in Northern Ireland.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) works closely with local authority representative groups in the devolved nations, including the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, to discuss UK-wide readiness. Officials in the devolved administrations and territorial offices also work alongside MHCLG to discuss best practice and consult on guidance. These relationships continue to be invaluable, and we will continue to engage closely across local government and across all of Northern Ireland as we approach the end of the transition period.

Yours sincerely,



**ROBIN WALKER MP**  
**MINISTER OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Committee for the Executive Office**

The Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont House  
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6 November 2020

Dear Brandon

**BREXIT: EVIDENCE FROM LOCAL COUNCILS**

At the Committee for the Executive Office meeting on 4 November 2020, Members heard evidence from some local councils on the issues and concerns they have as a result of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

Brexit poses a series of fundamental challenges for local councils in Northern Ireland, both collectively as a sector and individually as authorities. However, councils which border counties in the Republic of Ireland face particular challenges.

Representatives from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, which borders four counties in the Republic of Ireland, provided Members with an insight into the raft of challenges ahead of them. The representatives also informed Members that they had written to the Northern Ireland Office outlining the issues they are facing and requesting a meeting, in person or remotely, to discuss their concerns. However, a meeting has been refused.

Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed that I write to you to seek your views on the particular challenges being faced by councils which border counties in the Republic of Ireland and ask why the Northern Ireland Office refused a meeting request from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

A similar letter has issued to Ms Madeleine Alessandri, Permanent Secretary Northern Ireland Office.

I should be grateful for a response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely



**Colin McGrath, MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**

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