



The
Executive Office

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Stormont Castle

BELFAST

BT4 3TT

Tel: 028 9037 8228

Email: ps.ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Mrs Ciara Ferguson MLA

By Email: Windsorframework.committee@niassembly.gov.uk

22 October 2025

Our Ref: COR 0548 2025

Dear Mrs Ferguson,

Thank you for your letter of 19 September.

As you are aware, the report into the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework was published on 4 September and carries a range of recommendations and suggestions to the UK Government on the functioning of the Windsor Framework. We welcome the recognition in the report that “there should be additional expert staffing available to advise the Committee” and also welcome the recognition of the important role the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels (ONIEB) has to play in providing information and upstream engagement on EU legislation.

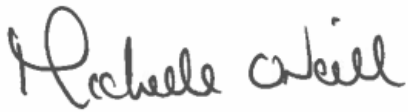
The UK Government is still considering the findings and recommendations of the report and have until January 2026 to respond. Our officials will continue to engage with the Cabinet Office and the Northern Ireland Office as they consider the report and their response to its recommendations.

In relation to the secondment of NICS staff to ONIEB, on 1 October the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will place an additional person in the office, bringing the DAERA complement to two.

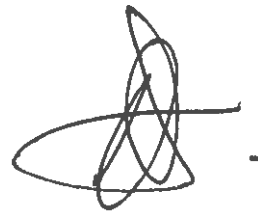
The Department of Justice will second a staff member from 1 October 2025 as an 18-month pilot to determine the value of the secondment.

We also understand that other Departments are looking at options to place officials in ONIEB.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michelle O'Neill". The script is cursive and fluid.

Michelle O'Neill MLA
First Minister

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be a stylized, abstract representation of the name "Emma Little-Pengelly". It consists of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Emma Little-Pengelly MLA
deputy First Minister



Mrs Ciara Ferguson MLA, Chairperson
Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny
Committee (DSC)

REF: DSC 198/25
19 September 2025

Ms Michelle O'Neill, MLA, First Minister
Ms Emma Little-Pengelly, MLA, deputy First Minister
The Executive Office

Issued via email to: PS.Ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Michelle agus Emma, a chairde,

Proposal for a Regulation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1255/97 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005

At its meeting on 18 September 2025, the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (DSC) considered the above proposed EU act and heard evidence from the Ulster Farmers' Union and the British Agriculture Bureau. This proposed Regulation began its EU legislative passage before the Committee was established and the Committee has agreed to gather evidence on it, in anticipation of a likely notification once it is adopted and published. Evidence received by the Committee to date can be found [here](#).

The Ulster Farmers' Union and British Agriculture Bureau raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed EU act, and commented on a lack of engagement from the UK Government and NI Executive.

The Committee agreed to write to you to ask, in light of the recommendations in the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework¹, how the Executive Office is engaging with the UK Government to increase the resources of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels (ONIEB) to deal with such issues. The Committee also agreed to ask whether individual departments are intending to second more staff to the ONIEB.

I would appreciate a response by 17 October 2025.

Le meas,

Ciara Ferguson, MLA
Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

¹ [Independent Review of the Windsor Framework - GOV.UK](#)