

DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

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Thank you for your letter of 6 February. I do of course recall the paper you handed me on 21 January and I have been following with interest the outcome of your subsequent discussions with Patrick Mayhew and Michael Ancram. I understand that they hope to have a further meeting with you later this week and that will provide the best opportunity to discuss the points you make in your letter.

As to the Northern Ireland Grand Committee, we are trying - as Tony Newton told Martin Smyth last week during Business Questions - to achieve the consensus which would normally be sought before proceeding with changes of the kind we have in mind. I know that Patrick and Tony Newton are both working hard on this and hope to announce the results of the consultation shortly. Meanwhile I am pleased to see that the Committee will next week be considering the Northern Ireland PES settlement.

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