

**Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc
Children and Young People Committee**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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27 June 2013

Dear Minister

The Further and Higher Education (Governance and Information) (Wales) Bill

Can I firstly offer you my sincere congratulations on your appointment as the new Minister for Education and Skills. I am sure other Members of the Committee will wish to join me in offering you their congratulations and are, like me, looking forward to working with you constructively to help create the opportunities our children and young people need to thrive and achieve their full potential.

As you may be aware the Committee is currently at stage 1 of considering the Further and Higher Education (Governance and Information) (Wales) Bill. Following his attendance at our meeting last week, I wrote to your predecessor to follow up a number of points about the Bill. I attach a copy of my letter for information.

One of the issues I raised was your predecessor's decision not to pursue with HM Treasury alternative ways of mitigating the effects of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) classification of Further Education Colleges (FECs) as part of central government. Members were somewhat surprised that your predecessor had apparently decided against approaching the Treasury on this point.

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The Committee was also aware that the Scottish Government appeared to be taking a somewhat different policy approach and had approached the Treasury to agree mitigating measures, which would allow Scottish FECs to stay within the public sector and continue to be subject to more direct government control.

So I also wrote to the Scottish Education and Skills Minister, Michael Russell MSP, to clarify the position in Scotland. Mr Russell has now replied and I attach a copy of both my letter and his reply for information. You will note that Mr Russell has said that he would welcome a joint approach to the Treasury with the other devolved administrations and that he believes there is much to be gained from a shared approach on this issue.

The Committee will consider Mr Russell's letter at its meeting on 3 July. It would be very helpful if you could let the Committee have, before then, your views on whether Mr Russell's offer is one that you would consider and whether this might have any impact on the timetable for the Bill?

As with my previous letter, I am copying this to Jocelyn Davies, the Chair of the Finance Committee, and to the Minister for Finance, Jane Hutt.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ann Jones', is positioned above the typed name.

Ann Jones AM
Chair