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Finance Minister responds to UK Government funding announcement, 24 July 2020

Finance Minister Rebecca Evans has described today's meeting with the Treasury as a "missed opportunity" for the UK Government to provide Wales with greater flexibilities to meet the financial pressures associated with the coronavirus pandemic.

The finance quadrilateral with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Barclay, Scottish Finance Minister Kate Forbes and Northern Irish Finance Minister Conor Murphy, was held to discuss arrangements for the forthcoming comprehensive spending review.

The Welsh Government has welcomed the certainty provided by the UK Government's announcement last night of a further £1.2bn for Wales to respond to the pandemic but more than half of the funding – £675m – relates to spending on PPE and the winter pressures funding, which has already been announced. All of this is a Barnett share of announced or planned spend in England.

But the Treasury today did not agree the Welsh Government's request to access a greater share of the Welsh Reserve this year – the Welsh Reserve is a savings pot which the Welsh Government builds up and can draw on to boost its budget in emergencies – and other budget flexibilities to help relieve spending pressures.

Rebecca Evans said:

I welcome the certainty that last night's announcement brings – I know what we can expect for the remainder of this year to deal with coronavirus ahead of any funding announcements in England. I am pleased the UK Government has listened to and acted on my calls for certainty and clarity.

But let's be clear, only a proportion of this is genuinely new money. It's a far cry from what Wales will need to reverse the long-term damage caused by the pandemic.

This was also a missed opportunity for the Treasury to give us the much-needed budget flexibilities, which will allow us to manage some of the coronavirus pressures by ourselves, within our own budgets.