

Amendments to UK Brexit bill will be proposed

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones and First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon today agreed to work together on amendments to the UK government's EU Withdrawal Bill.

These changes will be designed to protect devolved powers and responsibilities and provide effective powers to ensure devolved law works on withdrawal from the EU.

The First Ministers also committed to coordinate advice to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly to ensure that both are fully informed of the risks posed by the UK government bill and the proposed changes.

Both governments have previously made clear that they could not recommend legislative consent is given to the UK government's proposals as they impose unacceptable constraints on current devolved powers, and are impractical and unworkable in practice.

Following their meeting, the First Ministers said:

"We are approaching the 20th anniversaries of the referendums that established the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. Those votes, and the development of devolution since 1998, provide the secure democratic basis for self-government in Scotland and Wales.

"Since the vote to leave the EU, the approach of the UK government to withdrawal has been a rejection of the principle of devolution, and the sharing of decision-making across these islands, clearly chosen by the people of Scotland and Wales.

"Most recently the UK government has published position papers which involve the vital interests of Scotland and Wales but which have been prepared without the involvement of the devolved administrations.

"Most seriously, the UK government's EU (Withdrawal) Bill is an unashamed move to centralise decision-making power in Westminster, cutting directly across current devolved powers and responsibilities.

"The Scottish and Welsh Governments have already made clear that they cannot recommend that the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly give their necessary legislative consent to the bill. We believe that the bill must not be allowed to progress in its current form.

"To provide a constructive way forward, the Scottish and Welsh

Governments are now working to agree potential amendments to the bill which would address our concerns. We are also coordinating our advice to the Parliament and Assembly to ensure they fully understand our concerns and our alternative proposals.

“It will now be for the UK government to respond positively to our suggested amendments to move negotiations forward, and ensure there is a functioning legal system on withdrawal from the EU, and agreed UK structures, – where these are required – that reflect the views and interests of all parts of the UK, and respect devolved powers and responsibilities.”