

Brexit a year on: Devolved Administrations must play a key part in negotiations

Speaking at the conference, the Finance Secretary will say that the general election result means the UK Government does not have a mandate for a 'hard Brexit' and it is an opportunity to re-set the devolved administration's role in negotiations to leave the EU.

In a recent joint letter with the Scottish Government to David Davis, the Welsh Government put forward a series of practical steps to improve the engagement with the four devolved administrations, including the future role of the Joint Ministerial Committee set up to oversee negotiations.

The Finance Secretary is expected to tell the conference:

"The general election result sent a powerful message to the UK Government that it has no mandate for a 'hard Brexit', and that it must work differently to build a broad-based consensus across the UK on taking forward the Brexit process.

"We have been clear that this is an opportunity for the UK Government to reconsider their plans and their approach to the role of the devolved administrations in negotiations. With those negotiations beginning earlier this week, it is more pressing than ever for the UK Government to set out their approach.

"Brexit has big implications for the constitutional future of the UK which cannot be ignored. We can't just wind the clock back to pre-1973. Devolution is now an established part of the UK constitution and this must be respected.

"Only last week, we published our blueprint for a major constitutional renewal of the UK, which can meet the challenges Brexit poses for all devolved nations and the future governance of the country as a whole. It is clear that the existing inter-governmental mechanisms are not fit-for-purpose to enable agreement to be reached and these need to be overhauled as we prepare to leave the EU.

"The election result is also an opportunity to re-set the effectiveness of the current Joint Ministerial Committee set up to oversee the EU negotiations. That is why I have written jointly with the Scottish Government to David Davis setting out a series of practical steps to improve engagement and meet its original remit.

"At the centre of our proposals is the urgent need to resume the meetings at the earliest opportunity and agree a forward work

programme with meaningful input around negotiating meetings with the European Commission. We welcome the assurance in the Queen's Speech that the government wishes to build a broad consensus including with the Devolved Administrations – but now is the time to demonstrate that by urgent action.”