

# First Minister meets with Barnier to make the case for Wales

The meeting is an opportunity to build a direct relationship between the Welsh Government and the EU Brexit team, based on goodwill and respect, and set out the Welsh position on the negotiations.

The First Minister will present Mr Barnier with the Welsh Government's white paper, *Securing Wales' Future*, which offers a pragmatic starting point for negotiations that balances concerns over immigration with the economic reality that makes participation in the single market central to the UK's future prosperity.

The meeting is also an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the EU's negotiating position and make clear that Wales wants to maintain close ties with its European neighbours after the UK leaves the EU.

The First Minister will also stress the need for smooth transitional arrangements to give space for the negotiations to deliver a long-term relationship that works for the whole of Europe.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"I look forward to a mature, sensible discussion with Mr Barnier about the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The Welsh Government already has warm relations and an excellent reputation with the European Commission and I am keen to demonstrate that there are parts of the UK that are prepared to engage constructively with the EU-27, rather than indulge in playing to the gallery.

"Our white paper sets out positions on key issues, which differ from those that have been taken by the UK government to date, but which may well command wider support across the UK. This is an important opportunity to explain this perspective to Mr Barnier.

"My primary responsibility as First Minister of Wales will always be to get the best deal for Welsh jobs and the Welsh economy. With 67% of Welsh exports going to Europe, it is absolutely vital that we retain full and unfettered access to the Single Market. It would be irresponsible to turn our back on this.

"Our friends and neighbours in Europe will continue to be our friends and neighbours after we leave the EU, and we need to find a way forward together to address our common challenges. It is in no-one's interest, least of all of those of us who passionately want to maintain the closest economic ties with our European neighbours, for there to be no deal or a hugely painful rupture between the UK and the EU. We will do all we can to prevent this."