

Focus of Brexit negotiations must be on securing transitional deal – First Minister Carwyn Jones

“A year on from the EU referendum it is becoming increasingly clear that it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within 2 years,”

Mr Jones said.

“Therefore the priority in negotiations with the EU must now be on agreeing transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019. This will be vital in helping reduce the uncertainty around Brexit, which is damaging to the economy.”

Despite an eventful and often challenging year, the Welsh Government’s Brexit position has remained clear and consistent from the day immediately after the referendum; that the result must be respected and the economy must come first.

The First Minister said:

“Our 6 point plan was greeted with raised eyebrows when we proposed it the morning after the referendum, but it has stood the test of time and has formed the basis for our white paper, Securing Wales’ Future.

“Our balanced and coherent approach to leaving the EU, which puts economic interests at the heart of the agenda, is the closest thing the UK has to a realistic negotiating position, which meets the needs of all regions of the UK.”

Looking back at the past 12 months, the First Minister spoke about the Welsh Government’s achievements in their Brexit approach – from convening an exceptional meeting of the British Irish Council in July last year, launching our white paper – Securing Wales’ Future and the subsequent policy paper on Brexit and Devolution, establishing the European Advisory Group and the Agriculture and Environment Roundtable Group, developing the Business Confidence Plan, and also seeking assurances from the UK Government that our departure from the EU will not negatively impact on our NHS and universities.

The First Minister added:

“It is clear our white paper has influenced the UK government’s approach in important areas such as upholding existing employment rights and the crucial importance of transitional arrangements. We have also secured guarantees from the UK government that they will replace the EU funding Wales would have received up to 2020.

“The uncertainty and instability the UK government has allowed to develop over the past year is now being compounded by the ongoing chaos around the Prime Minister. With no mandate, no clear negotiating strategy and a cabinet riven with disagreement over how we should approach Brexit, the UK government must prioritise transitional arrangements to ensure that the Britain’s interests are best served.”