

Lesley Laird's letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland

Shadow Scottish Secretary, Lesley Laird, has written to David Mundell with three demands over the Joint-Ministerial Committee.

In the letter, which was sent on 1st September, Laird outlines three demands:

- That a JMC is convened within the next three weeks i.e. by the end of week commencing 22nd September.
- That the Secretary of State agrees to regular reporting and publishing of matters relevant to the JMC from the Brexit negotiations as they pertain to Scotland and other devolved nations.
- That the Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, Lesley Laird, attends the JMC meetings to ensure that opposition parties have input into the process

The full text of the letter is below:

The Rt Hon David Mundell MP

*Scotland Office
Dover House
London
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1 September 2017

Dear David

I am writing to express my concerns around the Conservative Government's handling of the Brexit process and in particular, the lack of opportunity for devolved administrations to contribute to the UK Government's negotiating position.

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) on Europe met four times between October 2016 and February 2017. However, since the collapse of the NI Assembly, the JMC has not met. This means that by the time Parliament returns next week, the JMC will not have met in around seven months.

Given that Article 50 was triggered in March, and the first round of negotiations began in June, this lack of engagement and dialogue is unacceptable and is failing the people of Scotland as well as those from other parts of the UK. By failing to call meetings of the JMC your Government is failing to deal with these critical matters in an open and transparent way and is excluding Scotland and other devolved administrations from having their voice heard and inputting into the Brexit process via the

JMC.

This is a situation that does not best serve our democratic process nor indeed does it meet the spirit of the intent to establish the JMC in the first place.

My understanding is that the position of the Government is that while there is no devolved legislator in Northern Ireland, the JMC cannot be convened as Northern Ireland cannot be represented. While I see the logic, I can't support a situation that has resulted in the other devolved administrations being unable have their voices heard in an official capacity.

I am also concerned at your apparent lack of involvement in the JMC and would ask that you press the Prime Minister to allow you to be present at any meeting concerning Scotland.

In order to try and restore some kind of level of credibility to the JMC I would urge you to take forward the following actions.

1. Ensure that a JMC is convened within the next three weeks i.e. by the end of week commencing 22 September.
2. That you agree to a regular reporting and publishing of matters relevant to the JMC from the Brexit negotiations as they pertain to Scotland and other devolved nations.
3. Allow me the opportunity to attend the JMC to ensure that Scottish Labour have input into this process.

The clock is ticking on the Brexit process it is imperative that you act now to establish a credible way in which the JMC can operate effectively and ensure the voices of the devolved nations are heard.

I look forward to hearing from you on these issues.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Laird MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland