

Migration top of the agenda as Finance Secretary meets with UK and Scottish Brexit Ministers at latest meeting of European Joint Ministerial Committee

Besides a discussion of the state of negotiations with the EU27, there will be a strong focus on migration issues following the Prime Minister's recently announced plan to reduce low-skilled immigration from the EU. Home Office Minister, Caroline Nokes will also attend along with the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Dominic Raab and Scottish Government Ministers.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Professor Drakeford said:

"It is simply wrong, as the Prime Minister did at the Conservative Party Conference, to pretend that migration policy can be discussed in a vacuum, when the rights of British citizens to live and work elsewhere in Europe and vice-versa will be a critical part of the negotiations on a future relationship with the EU. The Migration Advisory Committee's recent report has shown that we will continue to need – and benefit from – migration into the future. It would be foolish in the extreme to put at risk our access to the single market by insisting on ending freedom of movement only to have to increase inward migration from other parts of the world.

"More generally, we need a migration policy that allows us to attract workers into the right areas; both in terms of the type of work and the locations. We need a migration policy that works for the whole of the UK, not just for South East of England.

"For Wales, access to lower skilled labour is crucial, and should not be inhibited by an arbitrary salary threshold.

"Given the importance to our economic prosperity, and the interconnectivity between migration and our devolved responsibilities for public services such as education, health and local government, we are seeking assurance from the UK Government that we will be given the opportunity to share our views with them and that they will be taken on board, before the UK government sets out its future immigration policy later in the year."

The meeting comes a week ahead of a crucial meeting of the European Council on the 17 October and 6 months ahead of the UK leaving the European Union in March 2019.

The Finance Secretary continued:

“A sensible deal is within reach but we want the Welsh Government to be fully engaged on the content of the political declaration on the future relationship before it is agreed with the EU. Chequers was a step in the right direction, but the government will have to move more decisively in the direction set out in our White Paper Securing Wales Future, if a satisfactory outcome to the negotiations is to be achieved.”