

Press release: UK Government to table devolution amendments to EU Withdrawal Bill

The decision to proceed with the amendments to the Bill in the UK Parliament came after today's meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU negotiations where Mr Lidington said it was now imperative for the UK Government to fulfil the commitment given to Parliament to table changes to Clause 11 of the Withdrawal Bill.

The Minister said that discussions with the devolved governments would continue in the hope of reaching an agreement but the need for Parliament to have a detailed debate on the issues that have been discussed for some time now between the various governments had to be respected. The House of Lords are due to debate Clause 11 of the Bill in just over a week.

The proposed amendment will mean that all EU powers that intersect with devolved competencies will go directly to the devolved parliaments and assemblies at the time of Brexit. In addition, there would be a provision for the UK Government to maintain a temporary status quo arrangement over a small number of returning policy areas where an agreement for a UK framework had not been reached in time for EU Exit. This is to protect the UK common market and ensure no new barriers are created for consumers and businesses.

Speaking after the JMC (EN) meeting in London, The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Lidington, said:

The UK government has put forward a significant proposal on Clause 11 and it is now imperative that Parliament is given the chance to have a proper, open and informed discussion on it.

While I remain hopeful that a deal can still be done, we have a longstanding commitment to Parliament to bring forward an amendment and will now table it – as discussed with the devolved administrations.

I strongly believe our proposal would respect and strengthen the devolution settlements across the UK and do so in a way that still allows the UK Government to protect the vitally important UK common market, providing much-needed certainty and no new barriers for families and businesses.

The UK government has a proven track record on devolution, our amendment is reasonable and we have moved a considerable way on it. We will continue to have close and regular discussions with the devolved administrations in the hope of reaching agreement around how this relatively small number of EU powers are managed in the

early days of Brexit.

Present at today's meeting were ministers from the devolved administrations, including Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM and the Scottish Government's Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, Michael Russell MSP.

The aim of the JMC (EN) was to find an agreed way forward for returning EU powers to the UK, that both respected and strengthened the devolution settlements, while also providing certainty on how laws will work and minimising change for businesses and families as UK departs the EU.

The UK government will now shortly publish the frameworks analysis. JMC(EN) noted and agreed the UK Government's intention to publish its frameworks analysis and committed itself to continuing work towards agreements on common frameworks.

08 March 2018

The eighth Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) met today in 70 Whitehall. The meeting was chaired by the Rt Hon David Lidington MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The attending Ministers were:

From the UK Government: the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon David Lidington MP; the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP; the Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP; the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon David Mundell MP; the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Robin Walker MP; and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Shailesh Vara MP.

From the Welsh Government: the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford AM.

From the Scottish Government: the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, Michael Russell MSP.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Director General International Relations from the Northern Ireland Civil Service attended the meeting in the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Executive.

The Chair opened the meeting by summarising official level engagement since the Committee last met, including discussions on the proposed amendment to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. The Committee discussed the UK Government's proposed amendment to clause 11 and progress made towards reaching agreement. The Committee noted the timings for the Committee Stage debate in the House of Lords. All administrations remained committed to reaching agreement on the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. Discussions on further detail on the proposal would continue between the UK Government and Scottish and Welsh Governments in the coming weeks.

JMC (EN) noted and agreed the UK Government's intention to publish its frameworks analysis and committed itself to continuing work towards agreements on common frameworks.