

Stop playing politics with Brexit” – First Minister Carwyn Jones

To mark Europe Day, the First Minister will address an event at the European Commission in Cardiff. It will be the last time the European Commission Office in Wales hosts an event to celebrate Europe Day, which has taken place in the capital for the past 42 years.

The First Minister will talk about the bonds that have developed between Wales and the EU over the last half century and look ahead to a positive relationship with our European partners over the next 50 years. He will say:

“Not more than 70 years ago, Europe emerged from one of the most bloody conflicts the world has ever seen. What grew out of the wreckage of war was a new resolve and political will that the next generation would not have to endure the bloodshed and sacrifice of the last.

“That period of stability has endured and, while there are many reasons for that, perhaps most important of all has been political will. A will shown through new partnerships and economic union – including the EU – which has made our lives more peaceful, prosperous and stable than they have ever been.

“In 2016 the UK decided to leave the EU and, as a government, we have played our part in the national debate about our future outside those political structures.

“Just recently we were able to agree with the UK government a sensible and rational position to protect devolved powers after we leave the EU. We’ve taken flack for that, negotiating as we have done with a government of a different political stripe, but we’ve done it because it’s the right thing for Wales and our economy.

“There are arguments that we are yet to win and we will not give up on them. But, Europe Day is about something more. As important as the position papers, constitutional arrangements and trading borders are, what we are debating as we leave the EU is something much more fundamental. It is about the kind of country that we want to leave to our children.

“Just as the generation after 1945 made tough political choices to forge a new future, I believe that a choice of similar magnitude faces us now. There is more that unites us than divides us. Europe is, to borrow a famous phrase, more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are a continent wanting, fundamentally, the same things; peace, prosperity and a better tomorrow.

“And that’s my simple message on Europe Day 2018. We are leaving

the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe. I believe that the UK can choose this opportunity to re-engineer our relationship with our European partners in a way that safeguards common bonds and, in doing so, help us make real our ambition of a kinder, fairer politics.

“By putting in place a deal to leave the EU that maintains the ability for business to trade freely with its European partners for the good of both. A deal that enshrines the rights of young people to travel, to work and to study freely with Europeans like them. By putting in place a deal that continues to invest and build fairness into the regional periphery of Europe that can tackle the injustices of deindustrialisation and economic injustice.

“I am, therefore, challenging every political party in Wales and the UK to put politics aside and see Brexit through a wider lens. Let us work together in a new spirit of partnership to build a more positive relationship with our European partners over the next twelve months and achieve a settlement which the next generation can be proud of.”