

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's speech at Law Society of Scotland: 24 June 2019

Good afternoon, and thank you very much for inviting me here to address the Law Society of Scotland.

I'm always glad of any excuse to come back to Edinburgh. It's a city that has endless interest and fascination, a weight of history.

But also, this is a place that over the centuries has made enormous contributions to philosophy, to literature, to political, and of course, to legal thought.

And I'm very well aware, as somebody brought up in England, representing English constituency in the House of Commons, that Scotland has its own rich legal heritage stretching back almost a millennium.

And Scots law has certainly come a long way from its feudal origins, but it remains today a lively and important stream that interweaves with the legal traditions of other parts of the United Kingdom.

And I do actually think, that when we talk in the UK about our constitutional history, we do need to recognise Scotland's contributions.

We need to be talking about the Declaration of Arbroath as well as about Magna Carta.

When we talk about law, we should be ranking Stair along with Blackstone or Cooke.

And if we look at today's Parliament, you have Scottish jurists like Lord Mackay of Clashfern, like Lord Hope, still playing an active role, heard with respect, contributing something very important to parliamentary deliberations from a Scottish, and particularly from a Scottish legal perspective.

And that brings me to my topic today, on the future of devolution.

Just last month, we marked twenty years of devolved government, which has transformed the constitutional landscape of the United Kingdom.

And as we recognise that anniversary and mark the achievements of the devolved parliaments, I want to talk today about how the UK Government sees the future.

I'm going to talk about how Scotland's two levels of government can work together to deliver for citizens and what we are doing to contribute to that future together.

Now, the UK Government's position is clear.

Our vision for the nations of the United Kingdom is of strong devolved parliaments within a strong United Kingdom.

Not as some half-in-half-out compromise.

Nor something to tolerate reluctantly.

Nor a temporary stepping stone to a different constitutional future.

But as the settled state.

Because devolution is not something that sits in opposition to being a unionist.

It goes hand in hand with it.

So today I want to challenge some of the assertions that are often made about relations between devolved and central government.

That they are supposedly at their 'lowest ebb'.

Stalled.

Broken down.

Because in my experience, that is simply not the reality.

Now, yes, there are very clear differences between us on matters of substance, on issues of great importance.

But divergent political views – however strongly felt – have not prevented us from working together.

Intergovernmental relations are not defined by fixed moments, or set-piece events.

Good relationships don't begin and end with a meeting in Bute House or Downing Street.

Rather, it is a culture of joint working and constant dialogue embedded between the governments that continues in the background, usually away from the headlines.

And the scale and breadth of that joint work is far greater than is often appreciated.

It has seen our officials cooperating to map out the new UK-wide common frameworks we will need once we have left the European Union.

This has been done collaboratively.

Not held tightly from a desk in Whitehall, but co-designed to work for the

whole of the United Kingdom.

Responding to the message from business here in Scotland that what they want is certainty and a clear message from their two levels of government.

And that work has shown that more of those UK-wide frameworks can be light-touch than we first thought, or even can be handled, in many cases exclusively, at the devolved level.

And that we have now whittled down the areas in which we disagree to just four.

Now, official-level work can only take you so far, though.

I have always placed great importance on maintaining proper working relationships with my colleagues in the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

Acknowledging where we disagree but keeping a regular, candid and genuine dialogue.

Whether that's through the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations,

... which now aims to meet monthly, with a new Ministerial Forum reporting into us as well.

Or whether it's the First Ministers joining meetings of the UK Cabinet Committee responsible for managing EU exit preparedness...

... recognising there is a mix of devolved and reserved responsibilities in play,

... and that citizens expect their governments to come together on matters of national importance.

And I hope to embark on similar work with ministers from a Northern Ireland executive if there is agreement on having that restored.

Now I know that some have said that these meetings are all well and good, but they don't achieve anything.

That we talk past each other,

... and can't actually agree on anything.

But actually, look at what we have managed to agree.

We agreed a set of principles to underpin our work on common frameworks.

Amongst other things to enable the UK internal market to function...

And just last month we agreed again that as that work continues the UK Government would not bring forward any regulations to freeze the existing EU rules...

... and the devolved governments would not make any changes to that status quo.

And when there were criticisms of the EU (Withdrawal Bill) last year we made changes...

... and we reached an agreement with the Welsh Government that they were able to say respected the devolution settlements.

Now, that required patience and good faith.

And time. Time invested between us as Ministers to see whether we could bridge the gaps in our positions.

I remember sitting in the Cabinet Office with Mark Drakeford – before he became First Minister of Wales- and with Mike Russell, going through the draft agreement.

Line-by-line.

Paragraph-by-paragraph.

Until we all felt that we had something that we could take back to our respective governments for collective consideration.

Now, the Scottish Government, as we know, ultimately chose not to join the Welsh Government in the agreement that we had worked on...

... but the pragmatic approach that we subsequently both took meant that in practice we were able to continue to work together.

So when I hear that relations have broken down or have plumbed new depths, I do think we need to do a better job at setting out exactly what the nitty-gritty work looks like

... and how important it is that people actually see the evidence of their different levels of government working together, from City Growth deals boosting local economies right across Scotland, to new sleeper trains providing better service and connectivity to passengers.

Modern intergovernmental relations within the United Kingdom are nuanced.

It is not always the devolved administrations lined up on one side and the UK Government on the other. And the issues are not always binary.

Sometimes one Minister raises an issue that the other does not feel so strongly about.

Or asks for an amendment to legislation that the other can live without.

But we all agree that we need to ensure we have the right structures to allow those discussions to be worked through.

And that's why we are now conducting a review – kicked off by the Prime Minister and the First Ministers – to seek to agree where those structures

can be improved.

We've already made significant progress on a number of issues, such as setting out that devolved administrations will have an enhanced role in the next phase of EU negotiations and establishing common frameworks.

And while conversation and consultation will always remain at the core of our work together, we are working, too, to strengthen our dispute resolution mechanism.

Because as the UK leaves the EU, we want to ensure our system is equipped to handle the range of potential differences and unique circumstances.

But I don't just look at the role of the UK Government through the prism of intergovernmental relations.

Strengthening devolution also requires the UK Government to listen and to act.

To support devolved governments as they develop and to champion effective devolution as the best model for the nations of the UK.

That is what we have done throughout our time in government.

We supported the Smith Commission...

... and took through the Scotland Act to implement its reforms.

We set up the Silk Commission in Wales...

... that led to a refreshed Wales Act.

And that work to ensure strong devolution within the United Kingdom continues to deliver requires a commitment to see powers sit at the level that best delivers for the constituents that all of us, in our respective parliaments, are there to represent.

That doesn't just mean seeing things through the lens of central and devolved government.

It means making sure that the right powers are closer to communities.

The Smith Commission recognised this, when it called for further powers to be devolved from the Scottish Parliament to Scottish local authorities,

... recognising that devolution doesn't begin and end at Holyrood.

In England, we have championed this approach, devolving power to new Mayors in Manchester, the West Midlands, Liverpool City Region, the West of England, Cambridge & Peterborough, Sheffield, North of Tyne, and Tees Valley.

And just as we need to review and update our intergovernmental structures within the devolved administrations, so too we need to find routes for the voices of the cities and regions of England to be heard.

So we are committed to devolution for the long run.

It's true that the current Scottish Government has a long-standing aspiration to replace that system of strong devolved governments within a United Kingdom that acts together in the world...

... but the UK Government will continue to champion devolution as the best way to deliver for our citizens.

... and we will work to demonstrate how both Scotland's two levels of government can and should work effectively together.

And that point about there being two governments, each with its own respective competencies, both legitimate, is something that we need to articulate with greater clarity and more confidence.

Because sometimes the genuine political differences governments in Westminster and at Holyrood – whether on EU exit or anything else – can be taken as shorthand for a certain 'otherness' about the whole institution of the UK Parliament.

As if it is separate, distant, or disconnected.

The reality is, though, that Scottish Members of Parliament sit, and are entitled to take part, in every debate and every question time session in the House of Commons.

Scottish Members of Parliament convene debates,

... they secure Urgent Questions,

... they go clause by clause through legislation and move amendments,

... they sit on Select Committees and hold Ministers to account,

... and serve as Parliamentary Private Secretaries, as Whips, and as Ministers and Shadow Ministers.

The UK Parliament is not separate from Scotland...

... it is Scotland's Parliament, as it is the Parliament of every other part of the United Kingdom. And Scotland, represented through Scottish members, is a part of UK Parliament every day.

Not in opposition to Holyrood, but working alongside it.

So there is no contradiction in strong devolution sitting alongside commitment from the UK Government to deliver for all parts of the United Kingdom.

For example, investing more than £1.3bn in city and region deals in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Clackmannanshire.

... and taking action at a UK-level to support Scottish industries by freezing

spirit duty, supporting North Sea Oil and Gas, and driving a modern industrial strategy that delivers for the whole of the UK.

And taking pride, too, in what we represent together – as four nations – on the world stage through our armed forces, our unparalleled diplomatic network, and our international aid programme.

If I have one main reflection, having been in this role for eighteen months now, it is that we need to communicate to citizens about how this system of devolved and UK-wide governments can and does deliver for communities.

We need to be more confident in presenting ourselves as a government that upholds and champions the devolution settlements...

... but is also seen to act and to deliver in those areas where we, rather than the devolved governments, are in law responsible.

And get away from the wrongheaded idea that because Scotland has two governments – working in different policy areas – the relationship can only be combative and adversarial.

Because when I speak to business or to civil society here in Scotland, that is frankly not the conversation they want their representatives to be having.

Rather, they want us to make sure our structures of intergovernmental relations are fit for the future...

... and they want to see us together demonstrate how those structures deliver outcomes that matter to them, that will help to attract investment, create wealth and jobs, and build a better society.

They don't want us endlessly obsessing about process and procedure.

Those things are vital means to an end. But they can only ever be the means.

They are the means that – for our part – can prove to citizens that devolution is healthy and will thrive in the long term.

That it is strong and sustainable.

And that devolution will continue to flourish within a strong United Kingdom of four nations, the contribution of each adding to the strength of the others.

[PM statement on European Council: 24](#)

June 2019

Mr Speaker, before I turn to the European Council, I am sure the whole House will join me in sending our very best wishes to the former Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

All our thoughts are with him and his family at this time – and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Mr Speaker, last week's European Council focused on climate change, disinformation and hybrid threats, external relations and what are known as the EU's "Top Jobs".

The UK has always been clear that we will participate fully and constructively in all EU discussions for as long as we are a Member State – and that we will seek to continue our co-operation on issues of mutual interest through our future relationship after we have left.

And that was the spirit in which I approached this Council.

Mr Speaker, earlier this month the UK became the first major economy in the world to commit to ending its contribution to global warming by 2050.

And I am pleased that the regulations to amend the 2008 Climate Change Act – which are being debated in this Chamber later today – have received widespread support from across this House.

But ultimately we will only protect our planet if we are able to forge the widest possible global agreements.

That means other countries need to follow our lead and increase their ambitions as well.

At this Council the UK helped to lead the way in advocating for our European partners to follow suit in committing to a net zero target by 2050.

While a full EU-wide consensus was not reached, "a large majority" of Member States did agree that "climate neutrality must be achieved by 2050".

And I hope we can build on this in the months ahead.

In the margins of the Council, I also met Prime Minister Conte and discussed the UK's bid to host next year's UN climate summit, COP26, in partnership with Italy.

This will continue to put the UK at the heart of driving global efforts to tackle the climate emergency and leave a better world for our children.

Turning to disinformation and hybrid threats, we agreed to continue working together to raise awareness, increase our preparedness, and strengthen the resilience of our democracies.

I welcome the development of a new framework for targeted sanctions to respond to hybrid threats.

This sends a clear message that the UK and its EU partners are willing and able to impose a cost for irresponsible behaviour in cyberspace.

Mr Speaker, we must also make more progress in helping to ensure that the internet is a safe place for all our citizens.

That is why we are legislating in the UK to create a legal duty of care on internet companies to keep users safe from harm. And this will be backed up an independent regulator with the power to enforce its decisions.

We are the first country to put forward such a comprehensive approach, but it isn't enough to act alone.

So building on The Christchurch Call to Action Summit, the UK will continue to help drive the broadest possible global action against online harms, including at the G20 in Japan later this week.

In the discussion on external relations the Council expressed its concern over Russia's issuing of passports in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions – and reiterated its call for Russia to release the Ukrainian sailors and vessels captured in the Kerch Strait in November last year.

Russia has consistently failed to deliver its commitments under the Minsk agreements and continues its destabilising activity.

So with the UK's full support, the Council agreed a six month roll-over of Tier III sanctions, which include restrictions on Russia's access to EU capital markets, an arms embargo, and restricting co-operation with Russia's energy sector.

In marking the fifth anniversary of the downing of flight MH17, we also welcomed the announcement from the Netherlands that criminal charges are being brought against four individuals – and offered our continued support in bringing those responsible to justice.

The Council also expressed serious concerns over Turkey's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The UK has made it clear to Turkey that drilling in this area must stop. And our priority must be to see the situation de-escalated.

In the margins of the Council I also raised the issue of Iran. We are calling on Iran to urgently de-escalate tensions, and our priority remains finding a diplomatic solution to the current situation in the region.

Mr Speaker, a substantial part of the Council focused on what are known as the EU's "Top Jobs" – namely the appointments of the next Presidents of the EU's institutions and the EU's High Representative.

This is, of course, primarily a matter for the 27 remaining EU Member States.

So I have been clear that the UK will engage constructively and will not stand in the way of a consensus among the other Member States.

But it is also in our national interest that those appointed are constructive partners for the UK, as well as successful leaders of the EU's institutions.

The UK supports President Tusk's approach to create a package of candidates across the top jobs which reflect the diversity of the European Union.

As there was no consensus on candidates at this meeting, the Council agreed to meet again after the G20 this coming Sunday – as well as holding further discussions with the European Parliament.

So Mr Speaker, while I had originally anticipated that this would be my final European Council as Prime Minister, I will in fact have one more.

Finally Mr Speaker, President Tusk and President Juncker updated the remaining 27 Member States on Brexit.

This scheduled update was part of the agreement I reached in April to extend the Article 50 deadline for our departure from the EU to 31st October.

The Council repeated its desire to avoid a disorderly Brexit and committed to work constructively with my successor as Prime Minister.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

[Civil/crime news: change to variable monthly payments](#)

Starting on 1 July 2019 all variable monthly payments for contract work will be paid to the penny instead of rounded to the nearest pound.

Why is this happening now?

Recent IT changes mean we can now make these payments to the penny. This change will take effect for all contract payments issued after 1 July 2019.

Are there any other changes?

There are no other changes to the current arrangements. You should continue to make your monthly submissions in the usual way.

First payment under new arrangements

The first contract payment issued after 1 July 2019 will require an adjustment and may appear a few pence away from the expected figure.

This is because of the transition from rounding the payment to the nearest pound to paying to the penny. So, we will need to add or subtract a few pence from the first payment.

Further information

[Legal Aid Agency payments to providers](#)

[New National Angling Strategy aims to get more people fishing](#)

The [National Angling Strategy](#) (2019-2024) was launched today by Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd, with members of the angling community, and representatives of the Angling Trust at Get Hooked on Fishing's Northala Fields venue in Northolt, West London.

The strategy will be implemented by a new partnership body – the National Angling Strategy Partnership Board, coordinated by the Angling Trust with representatives from the Environment Agency, Angling Trades Association, Get Hooked on Fishing and Canal and River Trust.

The strategy was developed by technology and research company Substance after widespread consultation with the angling community and using feedback from the national angling survey that was conducted in 2018 which received 35,000 responses. The responses included the need to make more information available on where and how to fish and the need to emphasise the mental health and physical fitness benefits of fishing.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

The National Angling Strategy aims to get more people out to experience angling – because we know that getting outdoors and experiencing nature is good for health and wellbeing.

I'm really pleased that the Environment Agency is working with partners and anglers on this exciting vision for growing the sport and delivering the best possible angling experience in England.

Aims and Objectives of the National Angling Strategy

- Objective 1 – Develop awareness and knowledge of angling. A marketing campaign, backed by research, with new information on how and where to fish.
- Objective 2- Increase participation in angling An increase in angling

participation by 2024 and increases in females, young people and BAME communities taking part.

- Objective 3 – Develop social benefits through angling An increase in people getting physically active through angling, delivery of angling for health programmes; and an angling volunteer programme.
- Objective 4 – Develop Sustainable Places to Fish Involve anglers more in environmental improvement work and science, develop more local and accessible places for people to fish and develop more community waters.
- Objective 5 – Increase Angling’s Economic Impact Deliver a trade-backed market development plan, new funding for developing the angling sector and tackle shop and angling tourism support.
- Objective 6 – Understand angling data and evidence Develop an angling research programme to inform future actions, stakeholders and angling commerce interests, and to evaluate the strategy’s success.

May 2019 Transaction Data

In May:

- HM Land Registry completed 1,732,280 applications to change or query the Land Register
- the South East topped the table of regional applications with 390,642

HM Land Registry completed 1,732,280 applications in May compared with 1,682,690 in April and 1,723,578 last May, of which:

- 357,400 were applications for register updates compared with 326,712 in April
- 896,653 were applications for an official copy of a register compared with 900,402 in April
- 198,501 were search and hold queries (official searches) compared with 196,722 in April
- 19,228 were postal applications from non-account holders compared with 15,051 in April

Applications by region and country

Region/country	March applications	April applications	May applications
South East	394,377	390,282	390,642
Greater London	323,612	342,718	318,243
North West	207,148	184,671	203,002
South West	167,025	152,788	164,417
West Midlands	147,646	147,116	155,019

Region/country	March applications	April applications	May applications
Yorkshire and the Humber	139,817	130,318	138,521
East Midlands	123,991	116,289	125,246
North	87,349	77,117	81,397
East Anglia	71,766	66,009	70,692
Isles of Scilly	52	40	89
Wales	81,275	75,271	84,932
England and Wales (not assigned)	83	72	80
Total	1,744,141	1,682,691	1,732,280

Top 5 local authority areas

Top 5 local authority areas	March applications	Top 5 local authority areas	April applications	Top 5 local authority areas	May applications
Birmingham	27,727	Ealing	37,219	Birmingham	27,284
City of Westminster	24,089	Birmingham	25,660	City of Westminster	23,530
Leeds	22,015	City of Westminster	21,722	Leeds	20,600
Manchester	17,248	Leeds	20,362	Cornwall	17,452
Cornwall	17,232	Slough	18,637	Manchester	17,036

Top 5 customers

Top 5 customers	March applications	Top 5 customers	April applications	Top 5 customers	May applications
Enact	47,766	WSP Management Services Ltd	57,238	Enact	48,609
Infotrack limited	43,725	Enact	45,912	Infotrack Limited	46,242
Optima Legal Services	24,430	Infotrack Limited	42,935	O'Neill Patient	24,797
O'Neill Patient	24,345	O'Neill Patient	23,612	Optima Legal Services	24,643
My Home Move Limited	19,723	Optima Legal Services	22,671	My Home Move Limited	19,964

[Access the full dataset on data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk)

Next publication

Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The June data will be published at 11am on Friday 19 July 2019.