

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Scottish Brexit Minister raise concerns with UK government over their Brexit White Paper

In the letter, the 2 Cabinet Secretaries point out that the full draft White Paper on EU Negotiations has still not been shared with the Scottish and Welsh Governments ahead of today's Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) – despite previous assurances from the UK government that the devolved administrations would have a meaningful opportunity in shaping negotiating positions as they are developed.

Mark Drakeford said:

“We have not had the opportunity to read the UK government's White Paper on its negotiating position with the EU ahead of today's Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations), so it will be impossible for us to make the sort of considered contribution, based on evidence, which we think is essential. This is a clear breach of the JMC (EN)'s terms of reference, which require the Committee to try to seek agreement on the negotiation position of the UK government. It means that the UK government's position will not be as informed about devolved responsibilities as it needs to be, as negotiations move into their vital next phase.”

The full text of the letter is below:

Dear David

JMC (EN) and the White Paper

We are writing further to the unsatisfactory discussion of certain sections of the White Paper on the EU Negotiations at the Ministerial Forum on Wednesday.

This was clearly not the fault of your Ministerial colleagues who attended the meeting but of decisions taken elsewhere in Government about what can and cannot be shared with us.

We were not permitted to see a single word of the draft White Paper in advance of the meeting and could only make our contributions on the basis of a brief, oral summary of the relevant chapters. It is particularly bizarre that at least one chapter was sent to our Permanent Secretaries – who are not members of the Forum – while the meeting was underway.

This in no sense lives up to the assurance that we would have a meaningful

opportunity to shape negotiating positions as they are developed.

Moreover, the discussion of specific elements was further undermined by a lack of insight into the broader narrative: discussing cross-border transport is difficult without the context of proposals on customs arrangements, and the proposed mobility framework covering migration is clearly crucial for the science and research chapter, civil judicial cooperation and many other aspects of the White Paper.

We therefore wish to make it absolutely clear that we will not regard any discussion of the White Paper at next Thursday's JMC (EN) as meaningful, unless we have been given prior access to the text of the draft White Paper as it currently stands.

If we do not have this opportunity, we will have to make it very clear that we have been given no real possibility to consider, let alone influence the content of a document which will purport to speak on behalf of the whole of the United Kingdom, about matters, many of which are devolved, and on a subject which is of the greatest possible importance to the people of Scotland and Wales.

We are copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, the First Minister of Scotland, the First Minister of Wales, and to David Sterling as Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Yours sincerely

Mark Drakeford AM/AC
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid
Government
Cabinet Secretary for Finance
Constitutional Relations

Michael Russell MSP
Cabinet Secretary for
Business and

[Discussions on UK-wide principles for recycling drinks containers](#)

Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Hannah Blythyn, and the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, met their UK and devolved government counterparts to discuss potential UK-wide schemes.

The summit brought the four nations together to coordinate work at a UK level and set principles for the design of potential schemes across the UK. The Ministers agreed to work together on a scheme's design and operation.

A Deposit Return Scheme would see people pay a small deposit when they buy a

drink in a single-use container and get that money back when it is returned empty.

Following the summit, Hannah Blythyn said:

“We know about the impact single-use drinks containers are having on our environment, often blighting our countryside or ending up in our seas.

“I welcome working with the other UK nations on a UK-wide Deposit Return Scheme. There appears to be a collective appetite for a scheme from all UK nations, so this would be the most practical and effective way to implement a scheme.

“We are considering a number of solutions to reducing the impact of single-use plastics on our environment in Wales. Any scheme we introduce must be the best for Wales and work alongside our existing policies, which have made us first in the UK and third in the World for household recycling.”

[Pay rise offer for NHS Wales' staff on 70th anniversary](#)

The Welsh Government will be investing extra funding in addition to the consequential funding they will receive from the decision by the UK Government to raise pay for NHS staff in England.

The offer, which will provide a pay increase for staff across the NHS, has been negotiated with employers and unions. It will now need to be approved through a ballot of union members. It means all NHS staff in Wales will have pay parity with their counterparts in England, following the recently announced new pay deal there.

The Health Secretary said:

“I am pleased to announce, following negotiations with unions and employers, that we are now able to offer a much deserved pay rise to our hardworking and dedicated NHS staff.

“As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS in Wales, it is appropriate we recognise those who have made the service what is today and continue to deliver the best possible care for all in their time of need. Our NHS in Wales simply could not function without the skill, dedication and hard work of its staff.

After 8 hard years of austerity, imposed by the UK Government, we have committed extra funding beyond the consequential funding that we received following the pay rise in England, to offer a deal which is not only fair to staff and taxpayers but will also lead to a better NHS for Wales.”

The deal matches the offer made in England and goes beyond it in some areas which are important to our NHS in Wales.

These include a continuing commitment to look at the annual Living Wage Foundation recommendations so that NHS pay scales remain fair in the future. In addition, recognising the specific commitments to improve the health, wellbeing and attendance of NHS staff in Wales, the offer provides better payments during sickness absence than in England. Trade unions and employers will also work together to support individuals if they face a diagnosis of a terminal illness including support for the TUC “Dying to Work” campaign.

The pay offer includes:

- Going beyond our commitment to the Living Wage Foundation recommendations, with a new rate of £17,460 introduced from 1 April 2018 as the minimum basic pay rate in the NHS and the lowest starting NHS salary increases to £18,005 in 20/21.
- Investing in higher starting salaries for staff in every pay band by reforming the pay system to remove overlapping pay points.
- Guaranteeing fair basic pay awards for the next three years to the staff who are at the top of pay bands;
- Guaranteeing fair basic pay awards and faster progression pay for the next three years to those staff who are not yet on the top of their pay band.

[Over £1m to promote Welsh seafood at home and overseas post-Brexit](#)

Speaking ahead of a debate on Brexit and fisheries in the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed financial support from Welsh Government and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the Seafood Market Development Project over the next four years.

The project, which has been developed as a partnership between Menter a Busnes and Seafish, will develop the market development of locally caught and processed seafood from Wales.

It will also assist seafood businesses to define a clear seafood value, understand market needs, increase marketing expertise within the sector and

encourage vessels to attain Responsible Fishing Scheme standard.

The project will engage with vessels and businesses from right across the Welsh seafood sector. During the lifetime of the project, it is expected to support and engage with 60 businesses.

In September, the project will host a Trade Mission to Hong Kong to showcase the best of Welsh seafood at the Seafood Expo Asia 2018.

The new project builds on the recently announced package of financial support for the fishery industry through the Welsh Government's EU transition fund. Through the fund, the fishing and aquaculture industries will receive financial support over the next two years to help the sectors find new markets and prepare for future trading outside the EU.

Cabinet Secretary said:

"Brexit presents both challenges and opportunities for our fishery industry. As a Government, we will do all we can to support the industry prepare for these challenges and help them adapt to a post-Brexit world.

"I am delighted to announce over £1m will be invested in the Seafood Market Development Project over the next four years to help market Welsh seafood domestically and internationally. It will provide vitally needed support for the sector as the UK prepares to leave the European Union.

"This builds on the funding recently announced by the First Minister for the sector through our EU transition Fund. We want to make sure that sector has a strong and sustainable future and this funding will help identify trading gaps to ensure the industry thrives once we have left the EU."

[Welsh Government consults on new powers for petroleum extraction](#)

Following the Wales Act 2017 Welsh Ministers will take over responsibility for licensing onshore petroleum extraction from the UK Oil & Gas Authority (OGA) on the 1st October 2018.

Announcing the [consultation](#), Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

“The new petroleum licensing powers provide an opportunity to consider what should be our approach to petroleum extraction in Wales, for now and future generations. As a new area of responsibility for the Welsh Government, we commissioned a review of the evidence in 2017 to inform our future policy towards petroleum extraction.

“This consultation seeks views on that evidence and our proposed policy on petroleum extraction including fracking.

“Our aim is to sustainably manage our natural resources in a way which meets the needs of Wales today, without compromising the needs of future generations. To meet our climate change targets, our long-term aim is to remove fossil fuels from our energy mix while minimising economic impact and providing clarity for investors and encouraging them to invest in lower carbon alternatives.”

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“By not undertaking any new petroleum licensing in Wales or supporting applications for hydraulic fracturing petroleum license consents, we will be taking a small, yet important step towards a decarbonised future in Wales and will be contributing to the global movement away from fossil fuels.”