

Statement by the Welsh Government – Article 50 Supreme Court Judgment

A Welsh Government spokesperson said:

“We welcome the Supreme Court Judgment today which means that the UK Government must seek parliamentary approval in the form of a Bill before it can trigger Article 50 to leave the European Union. It is vital that the UK Government develops an approach to negotiations which reflects the interests of Wales and the UK as a whole – an approach to which the Prime Minister has already publicly committed.

“The judgment preserves and recognises the importance of the Sewel convention whereby Parliament will not normally legislate on areas devolved to Wales and devolved governments without their consent.

“The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with the UK Government, and the other Devolved Administrations, through the Joint Ministerial Committee process to influence the overall UK position. Our aims are to preserve single market access for business and to protect Welsh jobs and investment, along with the rights of workers.”

Securing Wales’ Future: First Minister Carwyn Jones and leader of Plaid Cymru Leanne Wood set out Wales’ post-referendum plan

The White Paper is not just a shopping list of demands from Wales, but a pragmatic starting point for negotiations that can deliver for all parts of the United Kingdom.

The paper, developed jointly by the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, balances concerns over immigration with the economic reality that makes participation in the single market central to Wales’ future prosperity.

The paper sets out 6 key areas:

- The importance of continued participation in the Single Market to support businesses, and secure jobs and the future prosperity of Wales
- A balanced approach to immigration linking migration to jobs and good properly-enforced employment practice which protects all workers whatever their country of origin
- On finance and investment, the need for the UK Government to make good on promises made during the referendum campaign that Wales would not lose funding as a result of the UK leaving the EU
- A fundamentally different constitutional relationship between the devolved governments and the UK Government – based on mutual respect, reaching agreement through consent
- Maintaining the social and environmental protections and values that we prize in Wales, in particular workers' rights, once these are no longer guaranteed through the UK's membership of the EU
- Proper consideration of transitional arrangements to ensure the UK does not fall off a cliff edge in its economic and wider relationship with the EU if longer-term arrangements have not been agreed at the point of exit.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones said:

“The White Paper provides a comprehensive and credible plan for the negotiations with our partners in Europe on the UK's exit from the European Union, based on solid evidence. It places Wales' priorities centre stage, but is designed to work for the UK as a whole. And it is based on dialogue and agreement between ourselves and Plaid Cymru, ensuring it will command strong support in the Assembly.

“It balances the message which the Welsh people gave us that we should leave the European Union with the economic reality that makes participation in the single market so important for the future prosperity of Wales, and indeed the UK as a whole.

“The decision is made that the UK will leave the European Union. The challenge we all face now is ensuring that we secure the best possible deal for Wales and the UK. Together, the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, intend to rise to that challenge”

Plaid Cymru Leader Leanne Wood said:

“In engaging with this process, Plaid Cymru has prioritised the Welsh economy. We have done this because two thirds of all of our exports go to the European Single Market.

“How we withdraw from the European Union is too important to be left to one party to decide. The consequences following on from the terms under which we leave, what ever they end up being, stand to be far-reaching and long-standing.

“Plaid Cymru has worked constructively with the Welsh Government to write the White Paper and in doing so we have strengthened the Welsh negotiation position.

“I now would urge the UK Government to take these proposals seriously.”

Summit brings bus industry together

Wales’ first ever Bus Summit, part of Economy Secretary, Ken Skates’ 5 point plan for the industry, will bring all interested parties together to look at how they can work more effectively together to deliver the best, most robust service possible.

Speaking ahead of the summit, the Economy and Infrastructure Secretary Ken Skates said:

“There is no question that 2016 was a mixed year for the bus industry in Wales. Whilst our bus network accounted for some 101 million passenger journeys – with many routes gaining in popularity – the demise of some service providers left certain communities, services and bus users vulnerable.

“The five point plan I announced last September sought to stabilise and support the industry in the short term but we must look for longer term solutions if we are to deliver a quality service that our thousands of passengers across Wales can have confidence in. I’m particularly keen to hear the views of the industry on how we can encourage young people to increase their bus travel. The MyTravel Pass pilot was a useful starting point and given us some valuable insight, we must now build on that and work with partners to develop an all Wales solution.

“This Bus Summit is an opportunity for us to share ideas to solve the difficulties facing the industry, define what we want our bus services to deliver and understand how we can better work together in order to deliver the quality services communities across Wales expect and deserve.

“In my eyes, that means a top quality and sustainable service, one that can drive forward our economy and our communities to greater prosperity. It means a service which works for both rural and urban areas, young and old and promotes and enables independent living, all whilst ensuring value for money for the tax payer.

“It’s a tough task but I’m positive we have the expertise and the will in Wales to deliver it.

“In the meantime, of course, we will continue to support local authorities and communities wherever possible, whether it be through taking on new services like the TIC between Aberystwyth and Cardiff or providing further financial support to areas affected by loss of service providers.

“But longer term I want to ensure we establish a better informed, better designed, long term approach to the planning of our transport system. I’m keen, amongst other things, to explore with others whether new legislation can play a role in this.

“This Summit will be a catalyst for that and I look forward to working with the industry to inform and deliver the best possible system, together.”

New £36m fund to reduce infant class sizes and raise standards announced by Kirsty Williams

Directed at the frontline and starting with the largest class sizes, it will target classes where teaching and learning needs to improve and where there are high levels of deprivation.

The money, consisting of both revenue and capital funding, will be invested over the next four years up until 2021.

The latest figures show that 7.6% (8,196) of infant pupils in Wales were in classes of over 30.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Our national mission is to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people.

“Time and time again parents and teachers tell me that they are concerned about class sizes. We have listened to these concerns, looked at the international evidence, and are today announcing a new £36m fund to address infant class sizes.

“There is a positive connection between smaller classes and attainment, particularly for pupils from poorer backgrounds. This

is most significant for younger children, which is why we are targeting this investment at infant class sizes.

“This announcement, linked to our other reforms, will create the space for teachers to teach and for pupils to learn.”