

The Prime Minister must not gamble with people's jobs and livelihoods

The First Minister said the outcome of the General Election means the UK Government has no mandate to put barriers in the way of continued full and unfettered access to the Single Market and has called on the Prime Minister to convene an urgent meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee to agree the UK's Brexit negotiating position.

The First Minister has also said the JMC meeting should include the leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party and of Sinn Fein, even if such a meeting takes place before the formation of a new Northern Ireland Executive.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“It is clear from the election that the UK Government has no mandate for the ‘hard Brexit’ championed by the Prime Minister.

“The Prime Minister has already lost one gamble. I will not allow her to gamble with the Welsh economy and with people's jobs and livelihoods. She must now listen to what we have been saying from the outset; full and unfettered access to the Single Market is central to Wales' – and the UK's – future prosperity and must be our first priority in the forthcoming negotiations.

“The leaders across Great Britain and Northern Ireland must meet face-to-face to jointly consider how to take forward the Brexit process. This is why we urgently need a meeting of the JMC.

“I have made repeatedly clear my Government's willingness to work with the UK Government and the devolved administrations to agree common approaches – through discussion, not diktat – to prevent friction within our own internal market.

“If the Prime Minister accepts this approach, she will find us reliable and constructive partners. If she does not – and, instead, attempts to ride roughshod over devolution and impose a more monolithic and centralised UK upon the devolved nations, we will have no choice but to oppose such steps.

“I have told her bluntly, this is a fight which she does not need.

“Later this week, we will publish a paper on our proposals for responding creatively to the challenges Brexit poses for the devolved nations and the future governance of the UK.”

The First Minister also questioned whether the Brexit deal would now be possible during the two year deadline because of the current political situation.

He added::

“Given the uncertainty following the General Election, it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within two years. This means it is essential we agree within the UK now, and seek the agreement of our EU partners early in negotiations, the form of transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019.”