

'We will continue to fight for a good deal for Wales' – Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford

A week on from Welsh ministers giving consent to the UK government's EU Withdrawal Bill, the Finance Secretary will set out Wales' priorities for the future, in an address to senior figures from local government.

Brexit will have an impact on all aspects of public services in Wales although the nature of this impact on local government is still unclear and will depend greatly on the form that Brexit takes. A Brexit which does serious damage to the economy will make it even more difficult to provide adequate funding for public services, while changes to migration policy could accentuate staffing problems in front-line services.

With the ending of Wales' access to EU Structural Funds, the EU could also bring significant changes to investment, development and funding for councils. The event will be an opportunity to encourage discussion about these issues before we leave the EU next year.

Speaking ahead of the event, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“As we progress through the EU negotiations, and prepare for a post-EU Wales, we need strong, collaborative leadership with Welsh Government, local government, business and civil society all working together. I'm greatly encouraged by the excellent work which has already gone on, not least through the European Advisory Group, and by events such as today's which really focus on attention on what needs to be done to prepare for Brexit.

“We appreciate the WLGA's strong support for our approach to future regional funding and the call for existing levels of funding to be retained and managed within Wales.

“I know that Local Authorities up and down Wales have played a major role in ensuring the efficient use of Structural Funds to improve infrastructure, develop skills and combat social exclusion. Projects such as Inspire 2 Achieve, Bridges to Work, the Holyhead Strategic Employment Site or Kingsway Swansea are prime examples of this.

“So it's vital, particularly in an age when our capacity to address issues from our own resources continues to be blighted by the unnecessary austerity policies of the Westminster Government, that this source of funding does not just disappear when the UK exits the EU. We will continue pursuing every avenue to ensure that Wales does not lose a penny of funding due to Brexit, as promised during

the referendum.”

Cllr Rob Stewart (Leader of the City & County of Swansea Council), WLGA Europe Spokesperson and Chair of the event said:

“Local authorities in Wales are preparing for Brexit, including the possibility of ‘no deal’, in a number of different ways. The WLGA’s event is an important opportunity to come together, to share our Brexit planning and the intelligence we are gathering on how local services could be affected by different outcomes.”