

Welsh and Scottish Ministers to discuss Brexit – Changes must be made to the EU Withdrawal Bill

Welsh Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford and Scotland's Brexit Minister Michael Russell will meet to discuss the UK Government's recently-published EU Withdrawal Bill.

The Scottish Government's Lord Advocate James Wolffe QC and the Welsh Government's Counsel General Mick Antoniw will also attend the meeting.

The meeting will focus on the need to amend the Bill so relevant powers remain with devolved administrations, rather than being taken back by UK Government, as the Bill currently proposes.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Professor Drakeford said:

"The Welsh Government's position has always been that we agree there is a need for an orderly exit from the EU, but that it needs to be based a set of arrangements that gives certainty to businesses; to our communities and respects the devolution settlement.

"The EU Withdrawal Bill does absolutely none of those things as it is currently drafted and the UK Government cannot expect the support of the devolved administrations on that basis.

"We want to help the UK Government to find a way out of the mess in which it finds itself and we will come to the table constructively to discuss UK frameworks which may be necessary when the UK leaves the EU. This must be done by agreement and not through imposition.

"We are talking about responsibilities which have rested in Cardiff Bay and Edinburgh since 1999. Our model of devolution has drawn public support through various elections and referenda and therefore cannot simply be reversed with the stroke of a pen in Whitehall.

"I look forward to discussing with Mr Russell today how we can work together to ensure the UK Government respects devolution across the United Kingdom."

Mr Russell said:

"The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is quite simply an attack on

the hard-won powers of the Scottish Parliament and on the principles of devolution.

“We cannot and will not stand by and let powers in devolved areas be taken by the UK Government. The Bill must be changed to respect devolution and our parliament.

“The Bill does not return powers to the devolved administrations as promised. Instead it imposes new restrictions on the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

“I look forward to discussing how we can protect devolution with Professor Drakeford and our priorities for amending the Bill.

“I hope the UK Government will also enter into negotiations on the Bill on the basis that we are equal partners on an issue that will have a hugely significant impact on the future of our economy and society.”