

# Welsh Government agrees deal on Brexit Bill that respects devolution

Welsh Ministers have come to an agreement with the UK Government on their proposed EU (Withdrawal) Bill that mean areas already devolved remain devolved.

The Bill, as originally drafted, would have allowed the UK Government to take control of devolved policy areas, such as farming and fishing, after Brexit.

After months of intensive talks, a compromise agreement has now been reached, meaning that the Welsh Government will be able to recommend that the National Assembly gives its consent to the Bill.

Changes to the Bill will be brought forward in the House of Lords tomorrow.

The agreement includes:

- Devolved areas remain devolved, but there are some limited areas where there is a need to agree UK wide rules to replace the current EU wide rules.
- All devolved powers and policy areas rest in Cardiff and Edinburgh, unless specified to be temporarily held by the UK Government. These will be areas where there is a need for common, UK-wide rules.
- The UK Government will seek the consent of the devolved legislatures as to which areas of current EU law will be 'frozen' while common UK-wide rules -known as frameworks – are agreed.
- The new amendments to the Bill include 'sunset' clauses that now guarantee the 'freezing' of these powers will be temporary, while the power to put things 'in the freezer' is also limited.
- Any such regulations made by the UK Government on policy areas they temporarily hold would expire after five years, after which the Assembly and the Welsh Ministers would be free to legislate.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance said:

“This is a deal we can work with which has required compromise on both sides. Our aim throughout these talks has been to protect devolution and make sure laws and policy in areas which are currently devolved remain devolved and this we have achieved.

“We have always recognised the need for UK-wide frameworks where the EU rule book will no longer apply.

“The original draft Bill meant powers already devolved would have been clawed back by the UK Government post-Brexit and only Ministers in London would have had the right to decide if and when they were passed back to the devolved parliaments. This was totally

unacceptable and went against the will of the people of Wales who voted for devolution in two referendums.

“We are now in a different place. London has changed its position so that all powers and policy areas rest in Cardiff and Edinburgh, unless specified to be temporarily held by the UK Government. These will be areas where we all agree common, UK-wide rules are needed for a functioning UK internal market.

“London’s willingness to listen to our concerns and enter serious negotiations has been welcome. In a devolved UK the respective governments need to deal with each other as equals and this agreement is a step in the right direction. This approach must now continue as we prepare for leaving the EU and the next phase of talks with Brussels.

“Make no mistake; the Welsh Government will continue to make sure Wales’ voice is heard loud and clear so we can secure a Brexit that protects devolution, jobs and our economy.”