

Brexit Briefing



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Wales



This is the seventh edition of the Brexit Briefing, we hope you enjoy. Much more information about all of these issues can be found on the [Brexit Section of our website](#).

There are three parts to the Briefing:

- 1) Summing up in the Senedd (Assembly)
- 2) News from the Imperial Capital (Westminster)
- 3) From the European Parliament

If you have any feedback let us know by emailing post@plaid.cymru.

Summing up in the Senedd

By our Assembly Brexit Spokesman Steffan Lewis AM and the Assembly Team



This week the leader of Plaid Cymru, Leanne Wood, and First Minister Carwyn Jones launched a [joint White Paper](#) setting out Wales' position for the negotiations for withdrawing from the EU. The White Paper emphasised the importance of continuing participation in the single market when we leave the EU in order to protect the Welsh economy from the damage and uncertainty that losing the ability to freely trade with our closest neighbours would cause.

Leanne Wood set out her reasons for joining with the Welsh Government to write the paper [here](#). She wrote, 'Plaid Cymru has been given an opportunity to influence and shape the Welsh position on Brexit. Had we not taken this opportunity, our nation's voice would have been weakened.' The White Paper marks a shift in Welsh Government policy. In September, in what was described as 'the most shocking event since devolution' by Adam Price AM, Welsh Labour joined with the Tories and UKIP to [vote against continuing single market participation](#). The White Paper was widely welcomed, including by the First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon, who called it a '[serious contribution to the Brexit debate](#)'.

Prime Minister Theresa May gave a [speech on 17th January](#) roughly sketching out the UK Government's Brexit plan. In it she said that the White Papers from both Scotland and Wales will be 'considered' as part of the Brexit process. This is a change in tone from earlier this year. [In July](#), Theresa May said she would not be triggering Article 50 until a UK-wide approach to negotiations had been settled. With substantial ideological differences between the devolved administrations and the Tories in Westminster, different Brexit mandates in the constituent nations of the UK, and an election looming in Northern Ireland, this looks to be close to impossible to achieve.

The Article 50 ruling in the Supreme Court is hugely significant for the National Assembly for Wales and its place within the constitutional framework of the UK. The judgement was unanimous: the UK Government is '[not legally compelled](#)' to consult AMs on Brexit. This validates Plaid Cymru's decision to [vote against](#) the Wales Bill last week, describing it as a 'significant roll-back of powers... which undermines the democratic will of people in Wales who voted for more powers in the 2011 referendum.' The Supreme Court ruled that under the new powers in the Wales Bill, there is still no role for AMs in the Brexit process. Steffan Lewis AM has said that Plaid Cymru will seek to give Wales a voice in Brexit by introducing a [Legislative Consent Motion](#) in the Assembly.

Meanwhile, Steffan Lewis AM has issued a rallying cry to those who are feeling despair about Wales' future post-Brexit. [He wrote](#), 'We cannot underestimate the threat that a bad deal poses to Wales. Our economy, our public services, even our national identity, are all at risk in the new Brexit Britain. But we cannot lose hope. We must continue the fight to build the progressive, outward-looking country Wales can be. We need a forward-thinking, inclusive movement that continues to make the argument for Wales' close relationship with our closest neighbours and friends in Europe. Plaid Cymru is committed to playing our part.'

News from the Imperial Capital

by Plaid Cymru's Brexit Spokesman in Westminster Jonathan Edwards MP and the Westminster Team



There have been significant developments since the last Brexit Briefing two weeks ago.

[Our Brexit spokesperson, Jonathan Edwards, secured a major victory on the Select Committee on Leaving the EU](#), by winning a vote on an amendment to their report calling for the UK Government to outline their position on continued membership of the single market and customs union before the vote on Article 50 is held. Jonathan appeared on the BBC's Sunday Politics programme to run through the implications of that victory.

On the 17th of January the Prime Minister made a major speech, giving the most detailed indication of the Government's intentions yet. Ahead of this speech, [Jonathan called for her to commit to continued membership of the single market and the customs union](#), to protect the 200,000 people in Wales whose jobs are linked to our trade with Europe.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's speech confirmed the opposite – that Wales will be dragged out of both the single market and the customs union. [Jonathan responded accusing the Prime Minister of putting the British state on track for an extreme Brexit](#), and vowing to vote against triggering Article 50.

Our spokesperson on rural affairs, Liz Saville Roberts, spoke in a debate on the floor of the House of Commons, [warning that the UK Government will do to rural communities, what they did to the miners, and the rural economy could be destroyed by an extreme Brexit](#).

Following comments by the US President, Donald Trump that he is hoping to sign a trade deal with the United Kingdom "as soon as possible", [Jonathan warned that any such trade deals could put our NHS at risk of privatisation](#), and called on the Government to assure the people of Wales and the rest of the British State that public services will be exempt from any Brexit trade deals.

Undoubtedly the biggest news since the last briefing however, is that the Supreme Court has finally made its judgement that the UK Government cannot trigger Article 50 without the approval of the UK Parliament.

It also ruled against the devolved governments, ruling that there was no *legal* duty for the UK Government to seek the approval of the devolved parliaments before it can trigger Article 50.

Our Parliamentary leader, Hywel Williams responded to this news immediately following the Supreme Court's judgement, releasing a statement online ([read the full response here](#)) and appearing on the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme, welcoming that the UK Government will be held to account by the UK Parliament but regretting that the devolved Parliaments won't have a role.

He confirmed that the Parliamentary group will be tabling amendments to the Article 50 legislation to ensure Wales' interests are represented and reflected in the legislation.

The Supreme Court's ruling that there was no *legal* duty for the UK Government to involve the devolved Parliaments in the vote on Article 50 is significant. It illustrates a problem that our MPs tried to resolve during the passing of the Wales Bill.

The so-called Sewel Convention, which is included in the Wales Bill and the Scotland Act, states that the UK Parliament will not normally legislate on devolved matters without the consent of the devolved parliament. The Supreme Court had to decide how to interpret the word 'normally', and ultimately they determined that it was a political, not a legal statement. During the Wales Bill's passing through Parliament, our MPs tabled amendments to remove the word 'normally' from this clause, but to no avail.

The week ahead

We understand that the next few weeks of business will be wiped to make room for the new Article 50 Bill. Our Parliamentary team will be preparing amendments to the Bill to ensure Wales' interests are represented and will be supporting amendments from our colleagues in the SNP and from other parties when those amendments benefit Wales.

The Bill will go through the Commons and Lords, where Dafydd Wigley will be doing all he can to ensure we take every opportunity to give Wales a voice.

Follow [@JonathanPlaid](#) and [@Plaid Cymru](#) on Twitter to keep up to date with the Parliamentary Group's work on Brexit.

From the European Parliament

by Jill Evans MEP & the Plaid Cymru Europe Team



[New research](#) by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has underlined the importance of the greatest possible access to the single market for small businesses in the UK. Most small businesses currently trade with the other 27 EU Member States and that trade is crucial to them. They need to keep that ease of trade without new administrative or financial burdens. One in five companies also employ workers from the EU, including low and medium-skilled workers, and need them to stay on in the UK. The FSB represents over 99% of all private sector businesses, so the UK government cannot ignore these important findings.

The same message came from Jill's recent meeting in Strasbourg with the European manufacturers association, EEF. For the UK's makers and exporters, the exit negotiations must ensure tariff free access to the single market. EEF believes that the UK should be ready to pay in to the EU in order to gain access to the biggest market on its doorstep. They also draw attention to non-tariff barriers and regulations, which are increasingly important in trade deals. EU regulation will apply far into the future, whatever deal is made, because UK and EU laws are so closely interwoven.

Wales has benefitted hugely from the European Investment Bank – the EU bank. Ieuan Wyn Jones was the first Welsh Government minister to access funding through the EIB for schemes to keep people in jobs and help redundant workers find new work. Swansea University's magnificent new campus was supported by EIB funding, along with many energy and infrastructure projects. Questions are now being asked about whether Wales will still have access to EIB loans. The bank's president said this week that it is clear in the treaties that the shareholders are EU members. The UK currently is a 16% shareholder, but what will happen on leaving the EU, no-one yet knows. The EIB does invest in countries outside the EU such as Norway, but it is accountable first to EU citizens. Lending in the UK is currently 44 times higher than in Norway. Jill is in the process of writing a report for the Culture Committee of the implementation of the European Investment Fund which is administered by the EIB.

This week marks the 30-year anniversary of the Erasmus programme, a flagship EU mobility programme that is so important to our young people and to our universities. Over the years, it has helped give thousands of young people in Wales more job opportunities, open their minds to new cultures and has led to many friendships that span across Europe. During 2014 alone, over 2,000 participants took part in Welsh international exchanges. As Jill has found as member of the Parliament's Culture and Education committee, MEPs of all nationalities and political persuasions are passionate about securing Wales and the UK's continuing contribution to this important programme. The celebrations of the programme in the European Parliament this week see not only EU citizens taking part, but also people from countries such as Norway, Turkey and Macedonia, as Erasmus+ extends beyond the EU. There is therefore no good reason why Welsh young people should miss out from these valuable cultural programmes after the UK leaves the EU.