



This is the fourth 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) News from the Imperial Capital (Westminster)
- 2) Summing up in the Senedd (Assembly)
- 3) News from the European Parliament

If you have any feedback let us know by emailing [post@plaid.cymru](mailto:post@plaid.cymru).

## Summing up in the Senedd

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



Last weekend, Andrew RT Davies, the leader of the Conservatives in Wales, claimed that powers over agriculture should be returned to Westminster when the UK leaves the EU because farmers 'do not trust' the Welsh Government. Agricultural policy is currently devolved and the Welsh Government will gain the power to review and amend over 200 pieces of EU regulation that underpin Welsh environmental law after Brexit. Simon Thomas AM, Plaid Cymru rural affairs spokesperson, [slammed Andrew RT Davies's comments](#), saying in fact that 'the Tories simply cannot be trusted to defend rural Wales'. He said, "the UK Government has completely failed to offer any security to farmers whose livelihoods are on the line. With this attitude being adopted by the Westminster government, it is absurd and

irresponsible for the Leader of the Conservatives in Wales to claim that farming subsidies would be better administered from London.”

[Steffan Lewis has argued that greater cooperation between Ireland and Wales will be necessary](#) to help us deal with the post-Brexit context. A ‘Celtic Sea Alliance’ should be established between the two nations, and especially between the western regions of Wales and the eastern regions of Ireland. Steffan Lewis drew on the example of Norway and Sweden where collaboration has meant that joint projects have secured financial support from the EU despite Norway not being a member state. He said, ‘Wales must look outward and must seize the initiative when it comes to our future relations with other countries and the prosperity of our communities.’

Meanwhile, [UKIP in the Assembly have ironically been calling for the Irish Government to pay for improvements to the M4 in Wales](#) because they would be able to access EU funds to cover the costs. David Rowlands, UKIP AM for the South East, was met with heckling on the floor of the Senedd as he suggested that Ireland could access EU funds on Wales’ behalf. In response, the First Minister first pointed out that UKIP led the campaign for the UK to leave the EU, so to try and find a backdoor to EU funds through Ireland is a little ridiculous. He then argued that asking governments to fund infrastructure projects in other countries because they are used by their citizens could lead to Wales being asked to pay for the M4 east of the Severn bridge, or England being asked to pay for roads from Calais. While Plaid Cymru argues for outward-looking collaboration with our neighbours to help to mitigate the impact of Brexit, UKIP seem to think that demanding payment for infrastructure projects from them is the way to approach foreign policy in a post-Brexit world. It is a shame that UKIP are only realising the benefit of EU funding for Wales after the referendum.

## **News from the Imperial Capital**

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



Since the last briefing, the UK Government delivered its Autumn Statement, which is the UK's Chancellor's opportunity to update the House of Commons and the public on the state of the UK economy.

The statement was a damning verdict on what Westminster used to call the 'long-term economic plan' and shone a light on the real impact that Brexit will have on people's livelihoods, and on people's wages in particular.

There were widespread reports ahead of the Autumn Statement that the Chancellor will face a £100 billion hole in public finances as a result of Brexit and its impacts on economic growth. Our Brexit spokesperson, [Jonathan Edwards responded to these reports](#) ahead of the statement, calling for assurances that the UK would honour its promises and plug any funding lost to Wales through leaving the EU.

Any claims by Brexiteers of the £100 billion hole being nothing more than scare-mongering were soon silenced when the Chancellor delivered his statement and the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) revealed the hole to be £120 billion, citing slower than expected economic growth, as a result of uncertainty over our membership of the single market, as a reason.

[Jonathan made an immediate response](#), making the case for the government to commit to maintaining our membership of the single market after leaving the European Union, to create certainty for investors.

Once our Westminster team, along with independent researchers such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) had poured through the figures it became clear that the impact on people's lives will be significant.

Particularly striking is the impact on people's wages over the next five years. The IFS revealed that wages will now be lower in 2021 than they were during the financial crash in 2008, calling it a period of wage decline unseen for 70 years.

Jonathan attacked what he called [Westminster's decade of decline](#) last weekend.

This week, we got the very sad news that a Chinese company that [had already signed a joint venture with a Welsh company](#) based in Betws in the Amman Valley in Jonathan's constituency, have now decided to pull out, as a result of uncertainty over Wales' membership of the single market.

The company had even changed its name to incorporate the Chinese company's name and was due to create 40 jobs in an area that is desperate for employment. The [BBC covered the story](#) when Jonathan raised it in Questions to the Secretary of State for Wales on Wednesday.

## **From the European Parliament**

by Jill Evans MEP & the Plaid Cymru Europe Team



The EU Commission chief negotiator with the UK, Michel Barnier, had a meeting this week with the leaders of all the political groups in the European Parliament, including the EFA President Josep-Maria Terricabras. He repeated that negotiations will be conducted without any aggression and with no wish for revenge. This is the general attitude in Brussels - so don't believe the tabloid press who are still conducting their own aggressive anti-Europe campaign and claiming bad feeling. That is not the case although obviously the EU will be safeguarding the rights of the 27.

The negotiations will cover acquired rights of citizens and workers, financial commitments, borders, international agreements, the reallocation of EU agencies and much more. Transitional arrangements are increasingly likely (with sunset clauses). An agreement should be concluded by October 2018 - assuming the process goes ahead next year.

This week the second meeting of the Welsh Government Advisory Committee was held. Jill is a member of the committee and of the sub-group on Wales in the World. The meeting was a very constructive and productive one.

Jill had a meeting with the Federation of Small Businesses to discuss their concerns about the exit negotiations and into the longer term.

She also attended the EEA-Switzerland inter-parliamentary group which debated cross border cooperation and free movement. At a time when Wales is trying to build a new relationship between itself and Europe, this was very relevant.

A [letter in the Times](#) this week from supermarkets, food businesses and farmers is predicting that an EU exit deal that limits the rights of migrant workers and access to the single market would put food supplies in the UK at risk. The food supply chain depends on employing workers from overseas, both seasonal and permanent. In addition, 75% of UK food exports go to other EU countries. Food production is the UK's largest manufacturing

sector, bigger than the automotive and aerospace sectors combined. In the letter to the Prime Minister coordinated by the UK's farming unions, 75 organisations have pledged support for a positive, bold and ambitious vision for the sector post-Brexit. But they also signal that food security, food safety and hygiene, stewardship of the countryside and affordable food is at risk if Ministers fail to deliver continued access to labour and the best possible single market access.