

Negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU

Brexit Monitoring Report

12 June 2019



The Assembly and

BREXIT

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

National Assembly for Wales
Senedd Research

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Brexit Monitoring Report

12 June 2019

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The Assembly and

BREXIT

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Developments in Westminster	2
Timeline of events	2
Brexit legislation	4
Common Frameworks	6
Common Travel Area	7
3. Developments in Brussels	8
European Parliamentary Elections 2019 Results	8
Welsh MEPs and Brexit	9
Next steps for the European Parliament	10
Next steps	10
4. Developments in Wales	11
First Minister	11
Statements made by the Counsel General and Brexit Minister	13
JMC	15
European Union Transition Funding	16
Assembly debates a further referendum	16

5. Areas of interest to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee17

British-Irish Parliamentary Association	17
EU nationals & student funding update	17
Independent Monitoring Authority to be set up in Swansea	17
Welsh Government statement on Brexit and our land consultation response	18

1. Introduction

This report provides an update on developments relating to the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU since 12 April 2019. Our **previous Brexit Monitoring Report** provides a summary of events before this.

This report provides:

- A summary of the key developments at Westminster and Brussels;
- Analysis of the Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales' response to the latest developments; and
- An analysis of issues of interest to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee (the Committee).

2. Developments in Westminster

On 24 May, the **Prime Minister announced** that she would resign on Friday 7 June. The Conservative Party will initiate its leadership election process from Monday 10 June and has announced that **a new leader will be in place by 22 July**. The section below describes events in the run up to the Prime Minister's announcement.

Timeline of events

On 1 May, the **Prime Minister emphasised** that she hopes the UK will leave the EU 'well before' the 31 October deadline during a House of Commons Liaison Committee scrutiny session. **David T. C. Davies MP asked whether Wales is prepared** for a 'no deal' Brexit and whether special support might be put in place for Welsh lamb farmers who are heavily dependent on exports. The Prime Minister replied that the UK Government had involved the devolved governments in all preparations and that:

One of the aspects that we have been considering as a Government is looking at those areas which could be particularly affected in a no-deal situation and the extent to which it would be appropriate for Government to act in those circumstances. That is a debate that continues.

The Prime Minister explained that she is confident that the future relationship will be able to be negotiated within the now-shortened transition phase, which is still due to expire in December 2020, and acknowledged the possibility of Direct Rule in Northern Ireland in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit. She also highlighted that the Withdrawal Agreement provisions allow for a further extension of this period, if required.

On 14 May, the Prime Minister's Brexit negotiator, Olly Robbins, travelled to Brussels to discuss potential changes to the **Political Declaration** which sets out the UK-EU future relationship. On the same day, the **Prime Minister confirmed** that the Withdrawal Agreement Bill will be voted on in the first week of June. **Shadow Brexit Secretary, Sir Keir Starmer**, told the House of Commons on 16 May that the Labour party will not be in a position to support the Withdrawal Agreement Bill when introduced.

On 17 May, Opposition leader **Jeremy Corbyn wrote to the Prime Minister** advising that the cross-party talks would come to a close without reaching a compromise after six weeks of deliberation. On 19 May, the **Prime Minister explained** that the Cabinet was considering holding a third round of indicative votes ahead of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill to 'test support for possible solutions would be useful as a prelude to MPs considering the legislation'.

On 21 May, the **Prime Minister introduced a 'new Brexit deal'** that she hoped would command a majority in Parliament, stating that:

The challenge of taking Brexit from the simplicity of the choice on the ballot paper to the complexity of resetting the country's relationship with 27 of its nearest neighbours was always going to be huge. All the changes I have set out today have the simple aim of building support in Parliament to do that. I believe there is a majority to be won for a Brexit deal in the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister laid out a ten-point offer to MPs in Parliament to be included in the Withdrawal Agreement Bill:

1. The Government will seek to conclude Alternative Arrangements to replace the backstop by December 2020, so that it never needs to be used.
2. A commitment that, should the backstop come into force, the Government will ensure that Great Britain will stay aligned with Northern Ireland.
3. The negotiating objectives and final treaties for our future relationship with the EU will have to be approved by MPs.
4. A new Workers' Rights Bill that guarantees workers' rights will be no less favourable than in the EU.
5. There will be no change in the level of environmental protection when we leave the EU.
6. The UK will seek as close to frictionless trade in goods with the EU as possible while outside the single market and ending free movement.
7. We will keep up to date with EU rules for goods and agri-food products that are relevant to checks at the border protecting the thousands of jobs that depend on just-in-time supply chains.
8. The Government will bring forward a customs compromise for MPs to decide on to break the deadlock.
9. There will be a vote for MPs on whether the deal should be subject to a referendum.

10. There will be a legal duty to secure changes to the political declaration to reflect this new deal.

In response, **First Minister Mark Drakeford tweeted:**

Where is the “bold offer” the PM promised? The commitment to safeguard workers’ rights & environmental standards are welcome, but this offer fails to provide clarity on our long-term economic relationship with the EU. I cannot see this commanding a majority in the Commons.

The following day on 22 May, Leader of the House of Commons Andrea Leadsom resigned from government in response to the plan. On 24 May, the Prime Minister announced that she would also resign on Friday 7 June. The resignation followed a series of Cabinet meetings regarding the new Brexit deal:

I negotiated the terms of our exit and a new relationship with our closest neighbours that protects jobs, our security and our Union. I have done everything I can to convince MPs to back that deal. Sadly, I have not been able to do so. I tried three times. I believe it was right to persevere, even when the odds against success seemed high. But it is now clear to me that it is in the best interests of the country for a new Prime Minister to lead that effort. So I am today announcing that I will resign as leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party on Friday 7 June so that a successor can be chosen.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

It is, and will always remain, a matter of deep regret to me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit. It will be for my successor to seek a way forward that honours the result of the referendum. To succeed, he or she will have to find consensus in Parliament where I have not. Such a consensus can only be reached if those on all sides of the debate are willing to compromise.

The Conservative Party will initiate its leadership election process from Monday 10 June and has announced that **a new leader will be in place by 22 July**.

Brexit legislation

The UK Government had originally planned to publish its **Withdrawal Agreement Bill on 24 May, announcing its scheduled publication** for the week commencing 3 June. On 28 May, in response to questions regarding whether the Government would still bring the legislation forward following the Prime Minister’s resignation announcement, the **Prime Minister’s spokesperson stated** that ‘We now have to reflect on the fact that we’re in a different position.’ In Brussels on 28 May, the **Prime Minister advised** that the matter is ‘now for my successor and they will have to find a way of addressing the very strongly held views on both sides of this issue’.

The statement also provided an update on the ongoing intergovernmental discussions regarding the JMC(EN) and the input of the devolved governments in the evolution of the Political Declaration. He updated Members on the disagreement between the UK and Welsh governments with regards to reserved/devolved matters and confirmed his intention to write to the relevant Minister on the broader issue of ‘respecting the devolution settlement’.

Ahead of a four nations conference on ‘Brexit, Devolution and Civil Society’ in Belfast on 2 May, Counsel General and Brexit Minister **Jeremy Miles said** that the ‘Welsh Government believes in the Union but we believe it has to change.’ He also explained that:

Our departure from the EU is creating new and fundamental tension for our constitution and the relationships between governments. Resolution of this tension will become ever more pressing as we move from the negotiation of the terms of our departure, and into the negotiation of our future relationship with the EU, and the wider world.

Of course we must continue to engage forcefully with the UK government to ensure Wales’ voice is heard in how this new working landscape is developed. If the constitution of the UK is to stand up to the pressures of Brexit and develop in a way which works for all, then Wales needs to be at the heart of this.

He reiterated Welsh Government’s call for:

- substantially enhanced powers for the devolved governments in such areas as the environment, agriculture, fisheries and many more;
- a UK Council of Ministers;
- better dispute resolution, including a proposal for drawing on independent arbitration; and
- a UK constitutional convention to address the question of how the UK’s constitution needs to change.

The Counsel General and Brexit Minister provided an update to the **External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee** on 3 June, stating that:

- The Welsh Government believes that the prospect of leaving in a soft-Brexit scenario is increasingly unlikely and that its preferred option is a further extension to allow for a second referendum.

The **Trade Bill** has passed its House of Lords stages and will return to the House of Commons for consideration of the Lords' amendments on a date yet to be announced. The Trade Bill is part of the legal framework that will allow the UK to enter into 'continuity' trade agreements with countries and trading blocs that currently have agreements with the EU. On 12 March, the Assembly gave its legislative consent to the Bill, following the Welsh Government **laying a supplementary LCM** (PDF, 160 KB) the previous month. The Welsh Government considered that its previous concerns had been addressed by amendments and non-legislative commitments. These were on UK Ministers' ability to legislate in devolved areas and restrictions on Welsh Ministers' ability to legislate to implement the Bill in devolved areas. A further **supplementary LCM** (PDF, 115 KB) was laid on 10 May. This covered an amendment to the Bill, made after the vote on 12 March, widening the term 'subordinate legislation' to also include subordinate legislation made under Assembly Acts and Measures. The Welsh Government stated that one of its effects was to widen devolved powers under the Bill. The requirement for the Welsh Government to consult the UK Government before making regulations under the Trade Bill will be disapplied in cases where the same thing could be done by Welsh Ministers in regulations under an Assembly Act or Measure. The Welsh Government recommended that the Assembly gave its consent to the Bill, as it considered the amendment to be an improvement. The Assembly **debated this supplementary LCM** in Plenary on 21 May and agreed legislative consent. The UK **Agriculture Bill** provides a legal framework to replace the Common Agricultural Policy and establishes a future system for agricultural and land management support after Brexit. It is currently awaiting a date for report stage in the House of Commons. The Welsh Government laid a **supplementary LCM** (PDF 163 KB) on 26 March, stating that its concerns relating to the Bill had been addressed by amendments and non-legislative commitments. These centred around the extent to which the WTO agreement on agriculture is devolved, and the distribution of the red meat levy. It will lay a further LCM at the point where the Bill has passed through the Commons and Lords, taking into account any further amendments made. The UK **Fisheries Bill** replaces the Common Fisheries Policy with a UK based legislative framework under the United Nations Convention on the Law at Sea (UNCLOS). The **First Minister advised the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee** on 29 April that some positive progress has been made in relation to the Welsh Government's concerns about aspects of the Bill. The one outstanding concern is around Clause 18, under which it is proposed that the UK Secretary of State sets quotas for UK fishing opportunities. The UK and Welsh Governments are currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding setting out how these powers would be used.

There are a further two Brexit Bills on non-devolved areas currently going through the House of Commons. The **Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill** is awaiting a date for the report stage and third reading. The Bill will end freedom of movement and extend immigration controls to apply to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens. It includes protection for Irish citizens in UK immigration law once freedom of movement has been repealed and the powers to amend retained EU law on social security. However, it does not set out the future immigration rules for EU citizens. Immigration itself is a reserved matter however this Bill will intersect with a range of devolved policy areas, including health and social care, higher education and certain industries.

The **Financial Services (Implementation of Legislation) Bill** was introduced in the House of Lords and is now awaiting a date for its report stage and third reading in the House of Commons. The Bill will allow the UK Government to make provision by reference to certain EU financial services legislation adopted up to two years after the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Common Frameworks

On 20 May, **the Counsel General and Brexit Minister, Jeremy Miles, issued a written statement** notifying Members that the UK Government had published its third report on matters relating to common frameworks and the use made by the UK Government of section 12 powers of the Act (the so-called 'freezing powers'). Section 3 of the Act requires the UK Government to report every three months and to share this report with the devolved governments. **The report, published on 16 May**, details progress made in the reporting period 26 December 2018 to 25 March 2019 (the **first** and **second** reports are also available).

On 24 May, the Counsel General and Brexit Minister provided a response to the **Chair's letter of 7 May**. The letter requested more information on the Welsh Government's view of the UK Government's revised framework analysis. The letter recognised that whilst 'strong progress' has been made on common frameworks and governance issues generally, 'there remain some fundamental issues to be resolved before individual Frameworks can be subject to wider consultation and discussion and then be brought to completion.' He further advised that the terms of the UK's exit from the EU will be a 'critical factor'.

Common Travel Area

On 8 May, the UK and Ireland entered into another **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Common Travel Area (CTA)**. The MOU is the latest agreement between the two countries reaffirming the rights of British and Irish citizens to move freely within Ireland, the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man without passport checks. The CTA is a long-standing arrangement dating back to Ireland's independence in 1922, although its name has changed over time.

The purpose of the latest MOU is to:

- reaffirm the status and rights of British and Irish citizens in each other's state;
- provide certainty and clarity to British and Irish citizens in each other's state;
- confirm that steps will be taken by both governments to ensure that the rights and privileges are appropriately reflected in their respective legal systems;
- confirm that joint work to maintain and enhance frameworks for cooperation will continue.

In a **joint statement accompanying the MOU**, the UK Government and Government of Ireland explained that:

For generations, Irish and British people have moved seamlessly between our countries, and developed deep and lasting ties. Although predating it, the CTA has also underpinned the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement. The CTA has and will continue to enhance and nurture bilateral relations between our countries.

There are associated reciprocal rights and privileges attached to the CTA that are enjoyed by UK citizens living in Ireland and Irish citizens living in the UK. These include access to employment, healthcare, education, social security rights, social housing and the right to vote in local and national parliamentary elections on the same basis as citizens of the other state.

3. Developments in Brussels

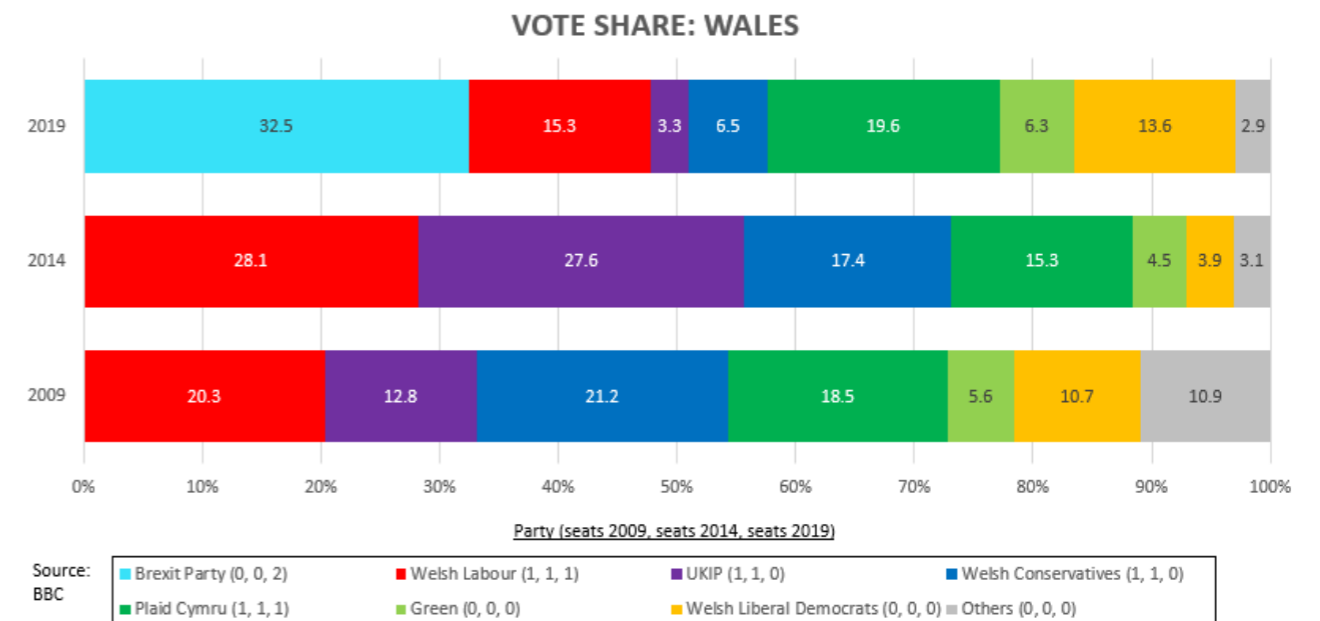
On 15 April, a spokesperson for the **European Parliament confirmed** that it would hold an 'extraordinary session' to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement if the UK approves the text between now and July. It would mean recalling the Parliament in its current composition, meaning that MEPs who have not been re-elected or who have retired would have to return for one last time.

On 16 April in a **speech to the European Parliament**, Donald Tusk updated MEPs on the latest Brexit delay. He also urged Member States not to treat the UK as a 'secondary state' between now and 31 October and to respect the new delay.

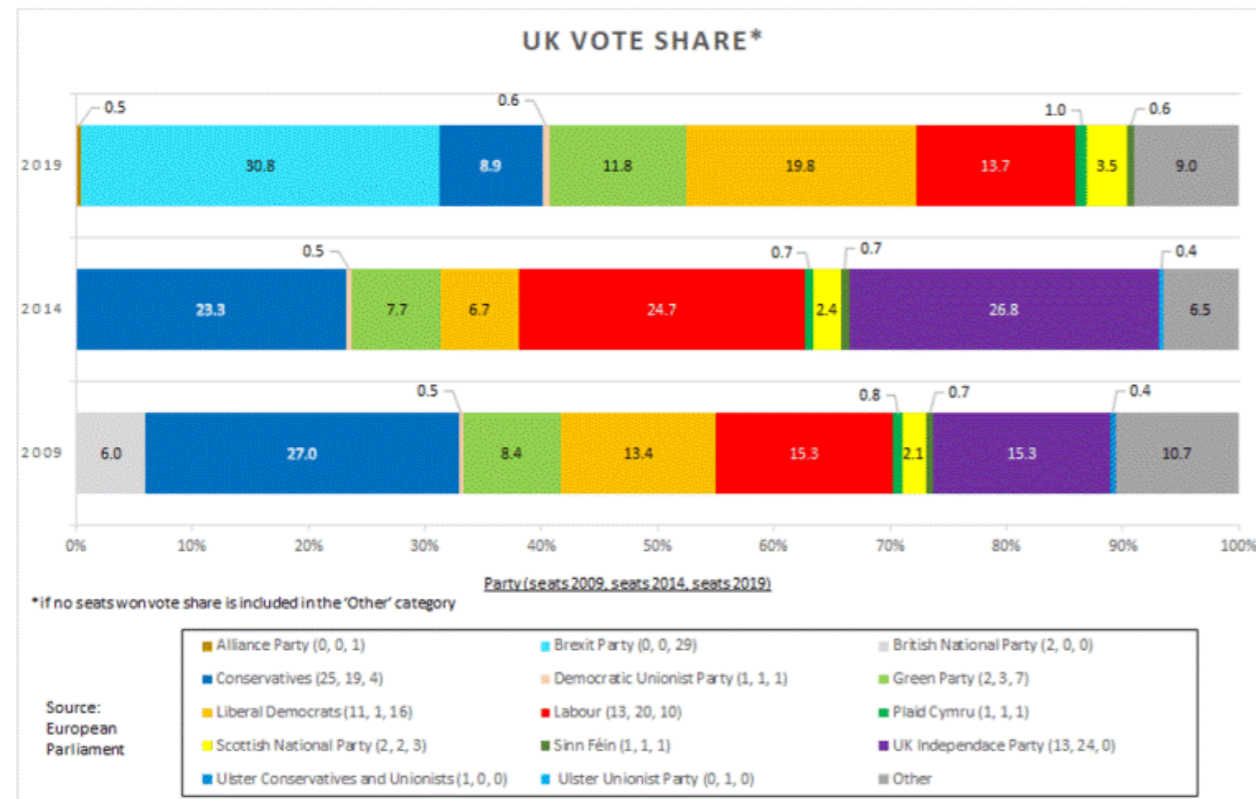
Also on 16 April, the European Commission **issued a Declaration** for the European Parliament Plenary. The Declaration outlines the function of various Brexit working groups, the desire of the Commission to continue to work closely with the Parliament as they have done throughout the negotiations and to take full account of its position prior to any decisions being made.

European Parliamentary Elections 2019 Results

Between 23-26 May, people in all 28 EU Member States voted to elect **Members of the European Parliament** for the next five years. The full results can be found on the **European Parliament website**. Senedd Research has also **produced a blog** on the results. Here are the results for Wales by vote percentage since 2014 and the allocation of seats for the new Welsh MEPs:



The UK has 73 seats in the European Parliament, divided across **12 electoral regions**. **Turnout in 2019 was 36.9%**, which was higher than in the **2014 elections**, when it was 35.4%. Prior to her resignation, the Prime Minister had hoped that UK MEPs elected on 23 May would never have to take up their seats. However, this is now unlikely due to the Conservative Party leadership process, with a new **Prime Minister due to be announced on 22 July**. The full UK results can be found **on this BBC webpage**. The UK results by percentage share of total votes since 2009 are:



Welsh MEPs and Brexit

After the UK's new exit day of 31 October (or before then, if an agreement is reached), the UK will cease its representation at EU institutions, meaning that Welsh MEPs will no longer sit in the European Parliament. Between exit day and December 2020 (the transition period), Wales will continue to be subject to EU laws but will no longer be part of EU decision making. The presence of UK MEPs will impact on the formation of, and funding allocations for, political groups in the Parliament, including the election of its President. If there are UK MEPs over the summer, this could also influence the selection process for the next European Commission President. UK MEPs will remain in place if exit day is postponed again beyond 31 October.

Next steps for the European Parliament

The European Parliament has published a new timeline of key dates. Its first plenary session of the European Parliament will take place on 2 July following the formation of its political groups. The European Parliament plays a role in the selection of key senior EU posts. By the end of 2019, five of these posts will fall vacant. Presidents are needed for the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the European Central Bank, in addition to a new foreign policy high representative. Throughout the summer, MEPs will elect the new European Parliament President and appoint Vice Presidents. The election of the European Commission President will take place on 4 July, providing that the European Council agree a nominee by the end of June. During September and October, the new College of Commissioners (political leadership of the European Commission) will be appointed and from November, the new President of the European Council will be in post.

Next steps

The **European Council meeting on 20-21 June** provides the next opportunity for the EU to formally review the progress of Brexit negotiations. On 10 May, **European Parliament President, Guy Verhofstadt**, said that he doesn't know if Brexit will go ahead. **European Council President, Donald Tusk**, also said that the chance of Brexit not going ahead is "20-30%", describing this as 'a lot'.

4. Developments in Wales

First Minister

On 13 April, the First Minister **spoke at the Welsh Labour conference**. He criticised the UK Government's handling of the Brexit negotiations, stating that the danger of a 'no deal' Brexit remains. The First Minister went on to note that the risks associated with Brexit have always been greater for Wales than other parts of the UK, and that these risks are compounded by the impact of austerity. He also stated that 'whether we stay or go, we are Europeans here in Wales.'

He reiterated this view on 29 April, during a scrutiny session with the **External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee** and said that the time left before the new October deadline should not be wasted. He indicated that the UK Government were more open to broader discussions than they have been previously. He again stated the Welsh Government's position that the decision should return to the people in a second referendum should the House of Commons be unable to support a deal and advised that electoral returning officers in Wales were prepared for this eventuality.

On the JMC, he expressed dissatisfaction that meetings are held in London and emphasised the importance of developing an independent dispute resolution mechanism for the four nations, to avoid a concentration of power in one nation. He said that work on the formal review of JMCs has been slow due to Brexit 'crowding the agenda'. On the Shared Prosperity Fund, he stated that there was still little information and no specific proposals had been put forward.

On trade agreements, the First Minister confirmed that, since 15 March, the Welsh Government has had sight of agreements before they have been signed, as well as the opportunity to contribute from a Welsh perspective. The Welsh Government has received agreement from the UK Government that there will be a new **ministerial forum for international trade** after Brexit.

On 9 May, the **First Minister delivered a speech** at the Institute for Government in London, on the future of devolution after Brexit, in which he spoke of potential future challenges to the UK constitution and how the UK Government and devolved governments might work together in the post-Brexit landscape. He stressed the importance of Wales having a voice in negotiations from the outset, saying:

The way that the United Kingdom prospers in the future is by having a negotiated space where those things can come together, where ministers from different parts of the United Kingdom are able to reach agreement, where there is independent mechanism for when agreement cannot be reached and where the United Kingdom operates on the basis of dispersed sovereignty rather than on the basis that there is only one source of sovereignty, which whenever you like is able to be wheeled onto the stage to trump everything else.

When asked what he expected from the UK Government in terms of trade negotiations and the devolved nations, he said:

Devolved administrations have to be involved through the whole of that process and when the UK Government is developing its negotiating mandate we have to be part of that discussion. And, that when the UK Government comes to negotiate on the basis of that mandate, that when devolved competencies are at stake we must be in the room.

During **First Minister's Questions on 14 May** the First Minister talked about storage preparations for a 'no deal' Brexit. He said that there was storage of medical supplies to ensure continuity of supply and that the food sector was working at full capacity to mitigate issues arising from a 'no deal' Brexit. On food, he advised that:

As far as the shops are concerned, people will not have the range and the choice of products that they have come to enjoy during our membership of the European Union if we leave the European Union without a deal. And those in Wales who rely on producing food that is exported to the European Union will equally find their businesses put at risk if they suddenly face new barriers—not of tariffs but of the non-tariff variety—that will mean that there will be a very significant threat to large parts of Welsh food producers

The following week during First Minister's Questions, the **First Minister provided an update** on discussions with the UK Government. He advised that meetings had taken place in Cardiff during the preceding week between the Counsel General and Brexit Minister, Jeremy Miles, and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Stephen Barclay; and also the Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language, Eluned Morgan, and the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox.

In response to Prime Minister Theresa May's announcement on the proposed contents of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, **the First Minister tweeted**:

Where is the "bold offer" the PM promised? The commitment to safeguard workers' rights & environmental standards are welcome, but this offer fails to provide clarity on our long-term economic relationship with the EU. I cannot see this commanding a majority in the Commons.

Following the EU elections the First Minister released [a statement on Twitter](#) on 27 May which said that the change in Conservative leadership ‘hugely increases’ the chances of a no-deal Brexit. On May 28 the First Minister appeared on [BBC Radio Wales](#). He reiterated his belief that a ‘no deal’ Brexit was increasingly likely and clarified Welsh Labour’s position:

I have now concluded that the only way we can try to guarantee a future for Wales that would not be a catastrophe is to put this decision back to the people in a referendum.

He went on to say that:

Faced with the damage of a hard-line, Tory Brexit, Welsh Labour believes that the final decision must be made by the public in a referendum. And, for the avoidance of any doubt, a Welsh Labour Government would campaign, in such a vote, for Wales to remain in the EU.

On [4 June in Plenary](#) the First Minister was questioned on his stance on a second referendum. He said

With the possibility of a deal having evaporated, then putting that decision back to the people, as this Assembly said, becomes the only option.

He stated that the Welsh Government had continued to press the UK Government to make preparations necessary for a referendum and that the Counsel General and Brexit Minister, Jeremy Miles, had discussed the matter on three occasions with the Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington.

Statements made by the Counsel General and Brexit Minister

On 30 April 2019, the Counsel General and Brexit Minister, Jeremy Miles, delivered a [statement in plenary](#). The statement provided an update on the latest Article 50 extension and Welsh Government’s revised response in preparations for a ‘no deal’ Brexit:

Given the extension, the intensity of our preparations has been revised accordingly. We will keep this, of course, under constant review, but just as it is incumbent on us to prepare, it is also incumbent on us to manage resources responsibly and respond when the details have changed.

The statement confirmed that the First Minister has written to the Permanent Secretary requesting that preparations be made in the event of a second referendum.

- It would be a very serious step to revoke Article 50 and would only be available as an option to the UK if its intention was to remain in the EU and not as a means to increase the amount of time to further negotiate its terms of withdrawal.
- ‘No deal’ preparations are now increasing once more, with consideration being given to risks posed by an Autumn, rather than a Spring, exit.
- The extra time afforded by the extension has been used to undertake ‘lessons learned exercises’. He said that ‘frequent and detailed discussions’ were being held with public services and stakeholders and that supply chain issues were being investigated.
- The Welsh Government did not have sight of the final version of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill prior to its intended publication and flagged the threat to other Brexit-related legislation should Parliament be prorogued.
- The Welsh Government received ‘no clarity from the UK Government about content or timing of a consultation’ on the Shared Prosperity Fund.

In a [statement to plenary on 4 June](#), the Counsel General and Brexit Minister said:

As a Government we will now campaign to remain in the EU. And to make that happen, Parliament should now show the courage to admit it is deadlocked and legislate for a referendum, with ‘Remain’ on the ballot paper. We have been calling for months for the Government to make preparations in case a referendum should be necessary: now Parliament must make sure it happens.

Let me be completely clear. Any deal will require a new mandate from the electorate: and leaving without a deal must require one also. And - of course - any referendum must include remaining in the EU as an option.

On Brexit preparations, he said that ‘it is not possible to fully mitigate the impacts of a ‘no deal’ exit on Wales’.

JMC

On 9 May, a meeting of the JMC(EN) took place in London. A [Joint Communiqué was published](#) following the meeting detailing attendees and a summary of what was discussed, including an update on the UK’s exit from David Lidington MP and the role of the devolved governments in the next phase of negotiations. The Committee also discussed domestic issues, including an update on common frameworks following publication of the [revised Common Frameworks Analysis on 4 April](#).

European Union Transition Funding

On 16 April, the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd wrote to all Assembly Members providing an update on funding deployed for Brexit preparations. **The letter** (PDF, 279 KB) provides updates on the Barnett consequential, European Union Transition Fund (ETF) and provides a list of projects supported through the ETF to date. The European Transition Fund totals £50 million and is in place to support external organisations and companies with Brexit. It come from a range of sources from the Welsh Government. £34 million has been allocated so far.

Due to the UK Government's announcement to spend additional funds on Brexit preparedness the Welsh Government received Barnett consequential amounts totalling £20.7m in 2018-19 and £31.1m in 2019-20. £10.4 million from the 2019-2020 consequential has yet to be allocated more funds were received than expected.

Assembly debates a further referendum

On 5 June the Assembly debated whether it should declare its unequivocal support for a further referendum on the terms of the UK's departure from the EU. The following **motion was passed**:

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales declares its unequivocal support for a confirmatory referendum on whatever terms proposed by any Prime Minister that the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, with remain on the ballot paper.

5. Areas of interest to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee

British-Irish Parliamentary Association

BIPA **held its 58th plenary session** on 13-14 May in Dublin with a focus on climate change and the sustainable development goals. The meeting also included a call for the mutual protection of the Good Friday Agreement and the work of BIPA Committees. BIPA meets twice a year to promote co-operation between political representatives in the UK and Ireland and build on the close relationship established in recent years.

On 29 May, the **First Minister and Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language met with Ireland's Ambassador** to the UK at the **reopening of the Irish consulate in Cardiff** to discuss plans to build on and strengthen the relationship between the two countries. The office previously closed in 2009 during the financial crisis.

EU nationals & student funding update

The **Minister for Education in Wales announced** on 31 May that EU nationals who intend to study in Wales for the academic year 2020/21 will be eligible to pay the same tuition fees as Welsh students and will be eligible to receive loans and/or grants from Student Finance Wales (SFW), subject to existing eligibility criteria.

This is a continuation of the current policy and students will be eligible to receive support until they finish their course.

Independent Monitoring Authority to be set up in Swansea

On 29 May, **Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, announced that** a new authority to monitor the rights of EU citizens will be set up in Swansea when the UK leaves the EU. He said that the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) would bring up to 200 jobs to the area. The authority will consist of lawyers and legal experts who will ensure the rights of EU citizens in UK.

The IMA was agreed between the EU and the UK as part of the Withdrawal Agreement. When asked what would happen in the case of a no-deal Brexit the Welsh Secretary said:

Even in a no-deal situation we would need to protect the rights of EU nationals that are living in the UK because everyone has said that we want a deep and special partnership with the European Union and the only way we can do that is to protect the rights of those EU nationals in a fair and balanced way.

So, on that basis, this shows that there is the need for an independent body - a powerful organisation that will be based in Swansea as per the agreement that we've got across government.

Welsh Government statement on Brexit and our land consultation response

On 4 June, the Welsh Government released a **summary of consultation responses** to its 'Brexit and Our Land' consultation seeking views on its proposals to support land managers after Brexit, along with their **response**.

