



David Rees MS
Chair of External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

28 August 2020

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 28 July. I have responded to your questions below, and would be happy to expand on these answers at the next committee meeting.

Separation arrangements between the UK, and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

- 1. The Explanatory Memorandum [to the Separation Agreement] stated that “The UK Government engaged the devolved administrations on this agreement and shared the draft text advance of it being agreed.” Can you please confirm that this was the case, and outline the form your engagement with UK Government took, in particular in relation to the areas outlined above?**

The draft agreement was shared with Welsh Government officials just ahead of publication but this was on the basis of advanced sight of the agreed details rather than a process of detailed joint work and joint oversight of the agreement. At all stages the Welsh Government has been calling on the UK Government for a genuine process of joint working and shared ownership of matters which relate to the UK’s withdrawal from the EU and our future relationship. The UK Government has not worked on that basis and as such agreements reached should be seen as decisions made entirely by the UK Government.

- 2. In addition to the arrangements set out in the separation agreement, the UK will need to negotiate and reach additional agreements on future UK-EEA EFTA arrangements before the end of the transition period. Can you please outline any involvement you have had or expect to have in these negotiations?**

The EEA-EFTA countries’ respective governments have agreed to accelerated negotiations with the UK Government through the summer, with an ambition to conclude a set of agreements covering both trade and non-trade areas.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) will co-ordinate the trade and economic aspects of these negotiations, working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office given its responsibility for broader bilateral relations with each country, and with Task Force Europe, to ensure consistency with the UK-EU Free Trade Agreement. Due to the current level of integration between the UK and the EEA EFTA States, we are advised that the UK is seeking continuity, as far as possible, with arrangements already in place.

In order to ensure the devolved administrations are kept abreast of developments, DIT has shared the UK's high level negotiating principles and proposed that regular updates are provided at official and ministerial level, aligned with existing communication and engagement mechanisms. We have yet to see whether these arrangements will be honoured on a regular basis.

I trust these answers provide a sufficient update.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol
Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language