



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-05-712  
Ein cyf/Our ref: FM -/05433/16

Mike Hedges AM  
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9 September 2016

Dear Mike

I am writing in response to your letter of 24 August regarding a petition received by the National Assembly for Wales Petitions Committee calling for a Welsh Government Department for Europe to ensure a clear, strategic and accountable voice for Wales in ongoing negotiations on the UK's departure from the European Union (EU). This is a welcome opportunity to highlight the significant progress which the Welsh Government has been making on this matter.

As First Minister it is my duty to ensure that Wales plays a full and active role in the negotiations to leave the EU making certain our interests are fully protected. There has been intense activity in Welsh Government on these issues since the referendum on 23 June. I, my Cabinet Secretaries and my officials have met, spoken and corresponded extensively with the Department for Exiting the European Union and other UK Government departments since the EU referendum.

These discussions span the full range of issues concerning the consequences for Wales of a UK exit from the EU, including both devolved matters and those issues which, while not devolved, have a major impact on life in Wales. I expect this extensive contact to develop and continue during the period ahead. I discussed the key Welsh Government priorities in July with the Prime Minister, who has ultimate responsibility for the UK's departure negotiations. Work is also in progress to establish new arrangements for communications.

Many aspects of the work of the Welsh Government will be impacted by the UK's departure from the EU and a wide range of officials across Government are engaged in this work. I have established a Cabinet Sub-Committee specifically to focus on European Transition, which is supported by a European Transition Officials Group comprised of senior officials with a particularly strong direct involvement in this work. These are helping to shape the Welsh Government's initial response to the result of the EU referendum.

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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.

I have also established a new team to co-ordinate the Welsh Government's work and negotiating strategy, which will work closely with the Welsh Government Offices in London and Brussels.

Externally, we are setting up a European Advisory Group to advise the Welsh Government on challenges and potential opportunities for Wales arising from the UK's decision to leave to the European Union. The Group will first meet later this month.

I do not believe that establishing a new department to deal with this work would provide any advantage over the arrangements I have described. I am confident that the structures we have set up are well grounded and flexible enough to meet the enormous challenges presented by leaving the European Union. All Welsh Government Departments are strongly engaged with this and the measure we have put in place will help us, alongside our partners, to achieve the best possible outcome for Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones', written in a cursive style.

**CARWYN JONES**