

Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit

6th Meeting, 17 January 2019

On 19 January 2019 we, as Chairs, Conveners and representatives of Committees scrutinising Brexit-related issues in the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, House of Commons and House of Lords, met at the House of Lords for the sixth meeting of the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit. Officials from the Northern Ireland Assembly were in attendance as observers, and the meeting was chaired by the Senior Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, Lord McFall of Alcluith.

This was a timely meeting, given events of recent days, including the heavy defeat of the Withdrawal Agreement in the House of Commons on 15 January, and the Prime Minister's announcement that she would seek cross-party talks on next steps.

Following the fifth meeting of the Forum, in Cardiff on 25 October 2018, we wrote to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon David Lidington MP, to draw his attention, in the context of the Government's review of the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) structures and Memorandum of Understanding, to key recommendations made by our various committees, and our shared belief that the current system of inter-governmental relations is not fit for purpose and is in urgent need of substantial reform.

Today we received a reply from Mr Lidington, and also met Chloe Smith MP, Minister for the Constitution within the Cabinet Office, who reported on the progress of the Government's review of the JMC structures. In response to questions, she indicated that it was for the four parliaments to bring forward proposals for a future structure for interparliamentary dialogue and scrutiny of intergovernmental relations post-Brexit, and that if they did so, the Government would be supportive. Members of the Forum also expressed concern over key issues, including the handling of areas of shared competence, the ambiguity of the Sewel Convention, and the mechanisms for intra-UK dispute resolution.

Given the current political uncertainty, we underline the continuing value of the Forum as an informal mechanism to enable parliamentarians from around the UK to come together and share thoughts and perspectives. But we reiterate that at some point, consideration of more formal interparliamentary structures will be needed.

The Forum will meet again in Edinburgh in April 2019.

Attendees:

Lord McFall of Alcluith, Senior Deputy Speaker, House of Lords

Lord Blencathra, Chair, Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, House of Lords

Lord Boswell of Aynho, Chair, European Union Committee, House of Lords

Baroness Taylor of Bolton, Chair, Constitution Committee, House of Lords

Lord Trefgarne, Chair, Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, House of Lords

Geraint Davies MP, Welsh Affairs Committee, House of Commons

Vicky Ford MP, European Statutory Instruments Committee, House of Commons

Patrick Grady MP, European Statutory Instruments Committee, House of Commons

John Grogan MP, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, House of Commons

Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, House of Commons

Bruce Crawford MSP, Convener, Finance and Constitution Committee, Scottish Parliament

Adam Tomkins MSP, Deputy Convener, Finance and Constitution Committee, Scottish Parliament

Graham Simpson MSP, Convener, Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, Scottish Parliament

Stuart McMillan MSP, Deputy Convener, Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, Scottish Parliament

Mick Antoniw AM, Chair, Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales

David Rees AM, Chair, External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, National Assembly for Wales