

David Rees AM
Chair, External Affairs and Additional
Legislation Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Ref: 139SUB 17

13 March 2017

Dear David,

Thank you for your letters of 15 February to the Secretary of State for International Trade, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and I seeking information to inform your inquiry on the level of access the Welsh Government has to governmental structures informing the EU exit process and post-exit structures. I am writing with a consolidated response to your request.

As the Prime Minister has made clear, the Government is committed to engaging the devolved administrations to get the best possible deal for all parts of the United Kingdom as we leave the European Union. Following the referendum we established the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations (JMC(EN)) to bring together the UK Government and the devolved administrations and seek to develop a UK-wide approach to our negotiations. To date the Committee has met on four occasions and has discussed a wide range of issues related to the UK's exit.

We have delivered on the Prime Minister's commitment at the last meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee Plenary (JMC(P)) in Cardiff to intensify our engagement with the devolved administrations ahead of triggering Article 50. We have engaged with the Welsh Government as we consider the proposals set out in its White Paper, 'Securing Wales's Future'. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union met with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on 1 March to discuss this paper and discussions are continuing at official level to explore its proposals in detail.

My key priority is to ensure that EU exit works for Wales. I am working with the Welsh Government, both as a member of the JMC and through bi-lateral discussions with Welsh Ministers, to explore the opportunities that our exit from the EU will offer to Wales. I am also engaging stakeholders in Wales more widely. In January I launched a series of events across Wales to hear the views of key sectors on EU exit. To date I have met with representatives from a wide range of sectors including agriculture,

pharmaceuticals, life sciences, creative industries, and energy. My attendance at Cabinet Committees allows me to represent the views of stakeholders in Wales at the heart of Government as we develop our negotiating position.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is also committed to working closely with the Welsh Government. We already work closely to support business identify and seize trade and investment opportunities, and the Secretary of State for International Trade attended the most recent JMC(P) to discuss how DIT and the devolved administrations can go further in this area.

Since the EU referendum, the DIT has been expanding its trade policy capability rapidly. DIT officials communicate regularly with the Welsh Government on a wide range of trade policy issues as we develop a new, inclusive trade policy which reflects the needs and potential of the whole of the UK. While we are a member of the EU, we remain part of the EU's Common Commercial Policy, so we cannot negotiate and conclude trade agreements. We will take forward discussions with the Welsh Government on ensuring that they have every opportunity to input towards international trade agreements in due course.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for International Trade, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Alun Cairns'.

Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP
Secretary of State for Wales
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru