



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt. Hon. David Lidington MP
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AS

12 June 2018

Dear David,

I am writing to you today in relation to the devolution amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill.

It is important to acknowledge that we have come some way since the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill was published in its original format, particularly in relation to Clause 11 (now Clause 15). When the bill was originally published, we faced a situation whereby all powers returning from the European Union would reside at Westminster until the UK Government chose to devolve them.

We are now in a place where a deal has been agreed by the UK Government and the Welsh Government. Both sides accept that this is a compromise, and I pay tribute to the work of UK and Welsh officials who have managed to improve the provisions originally contained within the bill.

However, it is my opinion, and the opinion of my Scottish Labour colleagues that the deal struck does not yet go far enough and still places restrictions on the Scottish Parliament that are unacceptable.

But, I do not believe that time has run out for a deal to be struck.

My colleague, Richard Leonard, wrote to you last month asking for cross-party meetings to take place in an attempt to break the deadlock that we are currently in. Given the deadlock that we are in now, I would urge you in the strongest possible terms to accept that invitation and to arrange for this to happen as a matter of absolute urgency.

When I spoke with your colleague, David Mundell, earlier today, he indicated that the Government is not prepared to reconvene another meeting until there is a new proposal on the table. I fundamentally disagree with this approach. In order to break this bind, it is my opinion that it is incumbent on the Government to try a fresh approach.



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I would put it to you that in this situation it is the Government's role to bring together fresh thinking and ideas on this issue.

I would therefore ask you to urgently convene a meeting, and enter into open dialogue with all Scottish party leaders.

I would also suggest that you bring to that meeting subject matter experts such as Prof Jim Gallagher, and the Law Society for example, to bring some new thinking and energy to this impasse.

We must not allow this stalemate to sow further divisions among the different nations of the United Kingdom. Sadly, unless there is a further intervention that is the direction of travel in which we are heading and I am therefore appealing to you to ensure that we do not reach that point.

You will have seen that the Labour Party tabled amendments to the bill that, in our opinion, would allow the UK Government and the Scottish Government to agree and move past the constitutional bind in which we find ourselves.

I would therefore urge you to give this amendment serious consideration. The Labour Party remains, and will continue to remain, willing to engage in serious, meaningful negotiations in order to protect our legacy of devolution.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lesley Laird'.

Lesley Laird MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland