

Mike Hedges AM
Chairman
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

29th September 2016

Ref: P-05-712

Dear Chairman

Thank you very much for your response relating to the petition: 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.

I see from the First Minister's response that many of the items I included in the petition document and the accompanying paper in the Institute of Welsh Affairs (dated the 29 of July) have been implemented. I am pleased to see, in particular, the cross party committee as well as the external advisory board. However I do have a few comments to make, that if considered and implemented, could greatly strengthen what are already positive steps:

1. I am concerned that given it is likely that the Brexit process will take a number of years, requiring full renegotiation of up to 60 trade deals (if we are to indeed leave the single market as well as the European Union - an important distinction between the two has unfortunately been lost on some in the Assembly of late), the First Minister will be distracted from the other important matters of government including the Wales Bill currently being read in the House of Lords and the potential for a new Act of Union Bill being discussed by the Constitution Reform Group led by Lord Salisbury. Both of these are important pieces of legislation for Wales and the Assembly's future. It would therefore be advisable to delegate many of the most important EU-related functions to a dedicated Department for Europe with its own minister.
2. With regards to the composition of the external advisory board; I am pleased to see that so many eminent European politicians and ex-diplomats of note as well as the VCs of the larger Universities in Wales will be consulted. I do however note that the business and economic communities are not adequately represented. Sixty percent of Welsh private sector employment and 99% of companies in Wales are SMEs - it would be good to see representation from the FSB as well as the IoD on the board. This is crucial because it is the economy that could be the most affected by Brexit. I would also like to see better representation of the Financial services community in Wales - they could be hit very hard if the UK loses its EU passporting through withdrawal from the single market.

I would like to finish by offering my thanks to the committee for discussing the petition, taking the contents seriously and in the spirit it was intended; to offer friendly concern and I hope constructive criticism.

With kind regards

Tegid Roberts

