

Mark Drakeford AM
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government

26 April 2017

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Human Rights in Wales

We have embarked on an inquiry into human rights in Wales. Our inquiry is looking at:

- the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union into human rights protections in Wales;
- the impact of the UK Government's proposal to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 and replace it with a UK Bill of Rights; and
- public perceptions about human rights in Wales, in particular how understandable and relevant they are to Welsh people.

We are writing to you, because of your role on the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations.

We have received written evidence, and have started taking oral evidence, hearing from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and Dr Simon Hoffman and Professor Thomas Glyn Watkin.



At this early stage, we wanted to ask what representations the Welsh Government will be making to the UK Government to ensure that the protection of human rights is central to the Brexit negotiations. We have already heard evidence raising concerns that the human rights legal framework in the UK will be weakened, when the UK leaves the European Union. This is because much of the current human rights framework is underpinned by EU treaty obligations.

While the UK Government has stated their intention to maintain the level of human rights protection in line with the EU at the point of the UK exiting the EU, we have heard concerns of the risk of increasing divergence if the European Union introduces further protections, which the UK may not choose to match. We have heard concerns about the impact of the loss of funding from the European Union which supports the equalities and human rights infrastructure and what this will mean for human rights protection.

There are also significant concerns about the loss of protections that derive from the Charter of Fundamental rights of the EU which are not protected by the Human Rights Act, for example a guarantee of human dignity, a prohibition on human trafficking and the social protections included in Title IV of the Charter.

We also note the Prime Minister indicated that she would include in a manifesto for the 2020 General Election a pledge to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. At the time of writing, we are unclear, if following the announcement of a general election in June, if this will be part of any party manifestos, and what impact on human rights protection this would have. We will continue to follow developments on this.



We will keep the Welsh Government updated with our thinking on this important issue. I am copying in the First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, the Chair of External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee and the Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee for information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Griffiths AM
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

