

Finance Secretary encouraged by discussions with peers as Brexit Bill enters 2nd reading in House of Lords

Professor Drakeford visited the House of Lords on Monday (29 January) to brief peers on his concerns with the EU Withdrawal Bill along with Scottish Brexit Secretary Mike Russell, Lord Jim Wallace, the former Deputy First Minister of Scotland, Welsh Government officials and former diplomat Sir Emyr Jones Parry.

The Finance Secretary presented his concerns to peers about clause 11 and other aspects of the bill which, as it currently stands, will mean powers in areas which are devolved to the National Assembly will have new restrictions placed on them once we leave the EU.

The Welsh and Scottish governments published amendments to the bill in September but these were defeated in the House of Commons as a result of the UK government opposition to them. Despite undertakings to do so, the government has not yet brought forward its own amendments to address the concerns about clause 11 and other aspects of the bill. The Welsh and Scottish Governments are therefore urging the House of Lords to consider supporting similar amendments, if the UK government does not bring forward its own amendments which are agreed with the Devolved Administrations.

Ever since the EU Withdrawal Bill, was published, the Welsh Government has resisted its power grab in devolved areas. Working with Scottish counterparts and peers from both sides of the House of Lords, efforts will be redoubled to bring about the necessary substantial change to it.

Mark Drakeford said:

“I am encouraged by the fantastic turnout and strong support from peers yesterday. I will work hard with peers from all sides of the House to ensure they have the briefing and information necessary to address this issue. What we now need is that the UK Government will come up with a satisfactory amendment early enough to mean a fight is not necessary. Be in no doubt, however, that if such an amendment is not produced, we will do everything we can to defeat this aspect of the bill and to bring about the changes which protect the devolution settlement across the UK.”

A vote upon the inclusion of amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill will take place later in February.

Education Secretary announces package of support for home educating families

Support for home educators will include help with exam registrations, the same health offers made to children in school, access to Wales' digital learning platform Hwb, exploring opportunities for home-educating families to learn Welsh and support from Careers Wales.

The Education Secretary has also announced that she intends to consult on using existing legislation to require local authorities to establish a database to assist them in identifying children not on a school register, not in education otherwise than at school and not receiving a suitable education. At the same time the Cabinet Secretary will consult on statutory guidance setting out the arrangements for the operation of the database and how it will be managed.

The consultation will consider which partners will be able to contribute to providing the most complete database, such as local health boards, and whether independent schools should be required to tell local authorities about the pupils who attend those schools.

The above powers could not be used to compel a parent to register that their child is being home-educated. However, the powers would enable the local authority to compile a reasonably complete database of children not on any local authority education or independent school register.

The statutory guidance will outline the arrangements local authorities will be expected to put in place to identify home-educated children, and to assess the suitability of education.

In order to be able to make an assessment the education is suitable, it would not be unreasonable for the local authority to see the child. This will be for the local authority to decide and will be influenced by a number of factors including the context and circumstances surrounding each individual child.

The statutory guidance will provide clear advice to local authorities on this matter.

The Education Secretary will announce further details to the National Assembly for Wales in a statement this afternoon.

Announcing the plans today, Kirsty Williams said:

"I fully respect the choice of parents to home educate their children and nothing I am considering or proposing changes that.

There are many valid, different and sometimes complex reasons why parents would choose to go down this route and in some cases this will be the best choice for the child.

“But this choice must be balanced with the right of children to receive a suitable education. Local authorities, by establishing a database supported by statutory guidance, will be able to assess whether a child is receiving a suitable education and, if they are educated at home, that home educators have the support they need.

“I know that home-educating families in Wales have previously had limited and varied levels of support from local authorities, and no support from the Welsh Government. I want that to change.

“That’s why we’re developing a package of educational support that includes making Hwb available to home-educated children, help with exam registrations, and exploring options for home-educating families to learn Welsh and a clear offer of support from Careers Wales.

“Balancing the right of the child to receive a suitable education with the choice of parents to home-educate is always going to be a challenge, but I believe the plans we will consult on represent a sensible and proportionate way forward.”

A grate result – Wales’ iconic Caerphilly cheese gains European protection

From today ‘Traditional Welsh Caerphilly/Traditional Welsh Caerffili’ is protected by the European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, one of three special European Protected Food Name (PFN) designations.

Under the EU’s protected food name scheme certain food and drink products receive Europe-wide legal protection against imitation, misuse and fraud. ‘Traditional Welsh Caerphilly /Traditional Welsh Caerffili’ is Wales’s first cheese to attain PFN status and joins a family of 15 Welsh PFN products.

The application for PGI status was made to the European Commission on behalf of Traditional Welsh Caerphilly Cheesemakers in Wales, led by Carwyn Adams from Caws Cenarth.

‘Traditional Welsh Caerphilly/Traditional Welsh Caerffilli’ is Wales’s only native cheese. Gwynfor and Thelma Adams from Caws Cenarth first made this

cheese in 1987 when they started making cheese as a direct result of milk quotas. Today, 30 years later, their Traditional Welsh Caerffili is made with the same original recipe and has been named after Thelma, as Thelma's Original.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

"I was delighted to visit Caws Cenarth recently and, having sampled their Traditional Welsh Caerphilly Cheese, I can confirm this is indeed a product worthy of recognition. I am pleased the Welsh Government was able to support Caws Cenarth, on behalf of all Traditional Welsh Caerphilly cheesemakers, with this application.

"We are proud we now have fifteen Welsh food and drink products that have been awarded PFN status. This is testament to the high quality and unique nature of our produce."

Carwyn Adams from Caws Cenarth said:

"Great care is taken at every step of the recipe. From the careful hand cutting of the curds to the individual hand moulding of the cheese. We are really excited to be able to protect the "Traditional Welsh Caerphilly/Traditional Welsh Caerffili" name. It's a guarantee of its quality and authenticity, and the skill and passion involved in the making."

The Welsh Government funds support to all Welsh producers wanting to attain PFN status, this support is currently delivered by ADAS.

THIS IS ME campaign launched to challenge gender stereotypes and prevent abuse

The TV, radio and online adverts show people in situations challenging our ideas about gender. A man working as a midwife, a woman working as a mechanic, a young man expertly applying make-up and a girl playing with a truck, covered in mud.

People are being encouraged to engage in the online campaign to talk about their experiences and concepts of stereotypes using #thisisme.

The [THIS IS ME campaign](#) is part of the Welsh Government's Live Fear Free campaign to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is part of a longer term campaign that will grow to look at other causes and consequences of abuse and violence.

The Welsh Government has been working with survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and subject experts to develop a campaign which deals with the underlying reasons for abuse.

Leader of the House Julie James said:

"The THIS IS ME campaign is part of our on-going commitment to rid Wales of the scourge of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Gender inequality is a cause and consequence of this abuse and violence.

It uses positive examples to challenge gender stereotypes and show that everyone has the right to be who they want to be and achieve their potential.

I hope THIS IS ME will create a discussion about gender stereotypes and I want people to engage in the campaign by talking about their own experiences. Everyone in Wales deserves to live fear free of gender stereotypes and abuse."

The new Welsh Government National Advisers for Violence against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Yasmin Khan and Nazir Afzal have backed the campaign.

Yasmin Khan said:

"The world can feel different, depending on your gender – gender can affect how safe we feel, where we go, what job we feel able to apply for and other people's expectations of us. The challenges around gender stereotypes and inequality limit all of us and puts pressure on us to conform to outdated, traditional values which are out of sync with today's Wales."

Nazir Afzal said:

"This is the first stage in a campaign to raise awareness of the underlying reasons for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, in order to challenge those ideas and behaviours and help build a society which does not tolerate these abhorrent acts."

Emma Renold, Professor of Childhood Studies at Cardiff University is a member of the stakeholder group that helped develop the campaign.

Emma Renold said:

“Safely and creatively challenging the impact of gender norms is at the heart of how to address all forms of gender based and sexual violence. This involves working together to make gender equity and equality a reality for all”

The campaign is also supported by You Tube vlogger Reuben de Maid, he said:

“I believe everyone should feel free to be themselves. My mum has always told me, my brothers and my sister that being yourself is the only way to be happy, and surely that’s what we all want for one another – to be happy and fear free. That’s why I’m encouraging everybody to support the #thisisme campaign.”

Welcome to Wales – Welcome to Welsh

Welsh Government, the Isle of Anglesey County Council, and Menter Iaith Môn have worked together to produce the Welcome to Wales/ Welcome to Welsh booklet for individuals and families moving to the island from outside Wales. The aim is to ensure that those who are new to Anglesey have an understanding of the Welsh language and the role it plays in the day to day lives of the island’s residents.

As one of the regions of Wales where the language is at its strongest, this is a pilot project – and if successful it will be rolled out to other areas.

On launching the new booklet at Canolfan Iaith Moelfre, Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning said:

“It’s a pleasure to come to Anglesey on my first visit to north Wales as Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to launch this booklet. I’m sure it will help those who move to the area to settle and to understand the area. I hope they will be inspired to learn more about local culture and to learn the language.”

Helen Williams, Chief Officer with Menter Iaith Môn added:

“We’re pleased to welcome the Minister to Anglesey today. This is an important project, and we’re grateful to the Government and the Isle of Anglesey County Council for their support as partners in the development of this new resource.

“We will be working with local schools to ensure we reach the right

audiences, and several estate agents on the island have already agreed to distribute the booklet. We hope to extend this to other organisations and businesses across Anglesey. With plans for a number of substantial developments here on the island – it's important that we not only take steps to protect and promote the language but also to help those who move here for the first time to understand a bit more about our language and culture."

Ieuan Williams, portfolio holder for the Welsh Language at the Isle of Anglesey County Council said:

"We welcome this booklet, and hope it will raise awareness within a wider audience of the importance of the Welsh language and culture here on Anglesey, a heartland of the language."

The launch will take place at 09:00 on the 29th of January at Canolfan Iaith, Ysgol Gymuned Moelfre, Anglesey.