

# Help us decide the future of Community Councils in Wales

Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford today announced that the Welsh Government was looking for two members to join a panel co-chaired by former Assembly Members, Gwenda Thomas and Rhodri Glyn-Thomas.

The co-chairs will be joined by another former Assembly Member, William Graham, and Powys councillor, Kathryn Silk.

The Welsh Government is seeking expressions of interest from clerks of community councils and those working directly with communities – whether in the public, voluntary or private sectors.

The review is part of the Welsh Government's broader plans to reform local government and aims to ensure that the most local level of government works well and delivers results.

Panel members will be asked to look at the potential role of community councils; define the most appropriate model/structure of local government to effectively deliver this role; and consider how this model could be applied across Wales.

Announcing details of the review today, the Cabinet Secretary said:

"We should never underestimate the difference that good community councils can make. They are often the closest to the people they serve and, with that kind of insight, are well placed to deliver services for the local area.

"However, while there are some very good community councils across Wales, their size, responsibilities and community involvement can vary.

"That's why we need an honest debate about what the future role of Community Councils might look like and how we can put in place a consistent structure that serves all of our communities well.

"We have representation on the panel from all the main political parties in local government in Wales and there will also be extensive political engagement as part of the panel's work.

"We now need two extra members who can bring their own experience to bear on the work of the panel. We would encourage anyone with a strong community-based background to apply."

The evidence-based and inclusive review of Community Councils is expected to start in July and take a year. All relevant stakeholders will be invited to

contribute including, but not limited to, community and town councils, principal councils and community and third sector groups.

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## [Sturgeon and Ewing treated parliament with 'utter contempt' over latest CAP fiasco](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Sturgeon and Ewing treated parliament with 'utter contempt' over latest CAP fiasco

23 Jun 2017



Scotland's farming communities are owed an apology from the First Minister and her rural affairs secretary over the latest CAP fiasco, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was confirmed last night that the Scottish Government has asked Europe for an extension in processing crucial Common Agricultural Policy payments, even though both Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing denied this as recently as yesterday afternoon.

Now they've been accused of treating Holyrood with "utter contempt" and not being up front with the farmers impacted by the failures.

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson piled the pressure on the SNP over another delay in CAP payments.

Even though the deadline for processing all payments is a week today, there are still thousands of famers waiting for much-needed cash.

As such, Scottish Government officials have asked the European Commission for that deadline to be extended to mid-October, or they face fines of up to £60 million.

**Scottish Conservative MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries Finlay Carson said:**

"Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing have some very serious questions to answer.

"We now know that earlier this week, they went cap in hand to the European Commission to plea for the payment deadline to be extended.

"But, when confronted in parliament over whether they had done, they ducked

and dived and avoided the question.

“In addition, we also learn today that Mr Ewing failed to let farming leaders know what he was doing – again in order to avoid scrutiny.

“By failing to make their position clear when they had the chance, the First Minister and the rural affairs secretary treated parliament with utter contempt and they should apologise immediately.

“And by failing to be clear with farming leaders, it’s clear that Fergus Ewing has lost the confidence of many people in rural Scotland – and he should be considering his position.

“This episode has been a disgrace and has exposed the SNP for what it is: secretive, out of touch, and all at sea. Scotland deserves better.”

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The Scottish Conservatives raised the matter at First Minister’s Questions yesterday:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>

**Last night, NFUS said:**

“We’ve asked for Scottish Government to have a clear and open dialogue with the industry on payments. Farmers and crofters should have been the first to know that once again there is to be a delay in payments. This does nothing to restore trust or build confidence.

“We have had many apologies about the system. We don’t want to hear sorry again; we want action that will ensure payments arrive in a timely manner.

“Failure to deliver farm support puts the whole of Scotland’s rural economy in jeopardy. Those farmers and crofters attending Day One of Scotland’s premier agricultural event at the Highland Show, are keen to do business, but are having to hold back on making business decisions and investment because of outstanding payments. They deserve transparency and clarity.

“If the extension saves the Scottish taxpayer £60 million in fines, that is good news but it takes the thousands of Scottish farmers and crofters who are still waiting on part or all of their payments no further forward and with no clear timetable provided. Some of those payments have been outstanding for 18 months. That is wholly unacceptable.”

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## **Lib Dems table amendment on Single Market to Queen’s Speech**

The Liberal Democrats have tabled an amendment to the Queen’s Speech calling for Britain to stay the single market and customs union.

The party is now calling on both Labour and Conservative MPs to support the amendment and inflict a historic defeat on the government, forcing Theresa May to soften her extreme approach to Brexit.

An amendment to the Queen's speech last year was accepted by the government after it received cross-party support.

Liberal Democrat Brexit Spokesperson Tom Brake commented:

"We've already seen living standards fall and prices rise since last year's Brexit vote.

"But this is nothing compared to the pain that would be caused by Theresa May's extreme version of Brexit.

"Tearing up Britain's membership of the world's largest market would mean fewer jobs, higher prices in the shops and a long-term blow to our prosperity.

"We will not give up the fight to protect our economy by staying in the Single Market and Customs Union.

"I am urging all like-minded Labour and Conservative MPs to be on the right side of history and back this amendment."

[Sign our single market petition](#)

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**It's time for a united Britain that works for the many, not the few.**

**23 June 2017**

**Kezia Dugdale writes for the Times Red Box on the Queen's speech:**

*When Theresa May planned the Queen's speech before calling her snap General Election, she would have thought it would be anything but threadbare.*

*She was planning to have a commanding Commons majority, allowing her to force through a raft of policies to punish the poorest in our society.*

*But her gamble backfired spectacularly, and her dreadful campaign and floundering attempts to stitch a deal together with the DUP has left her with no mandate and no authority.*

*As a result, we saw a Queen's speech reflecting the position of a Prime Minister in name only, while Jeremy Corbyn's government-in-waiting watched on.*

*Labour MPs, including the seven that Scotland sent to the Commons, will relish every chance in this parliament to derail the Tories' agenda.*

*The Queen's speech offered very little for Scotland. No further support for our vital oil and gas industry, no measures to protect the 250,000 WASPI women in Scotland affected by the botched acceleration of the state pension age, and no attempt to scrap the emergency services tax, which sees Scotland's overstretched fire and police services pay millions of pounds in VAT.*

*The General Election should have sent a clear message to the Prime Minister. She needs to abandon the failed politics of austerity. Seven years of painful cuts have simply gone too far.*

*Our public services are at breaking point, working families are struggling to make ends meet, and the Tory government lurches from crisis to crisis. It simply isn't good enough.*

*The parallels between Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon are now striking. Both have lost all authority and their supporters are deserting them – both in the country at large and within their inner circles.*

*Their brand of isolationist, nationalist politics feels outdated to an electorate sick of division.*

*Both now lead governments which are exhausted, having completely run out of ideas.*

*It is more important than ever that people in Scotland and across the UK realise there is an alternative to the extremes of Tory and SNP nationalism.*

*That alternative is the Labour Party. Our pro-UK anti-austerity message that together we're stronger is what the majority of Scots want.*

*That's why in the General Election we overturned huge SNP majorities and slashed many more. When the next election is called, we are ready to seize more seats from of an out-of-touch SNP – and we will kick Theresa May out of Downing Street.*

*After seven years of Tory austerity, and a decade of SNP division, it's time for a united Britain that works for the many, not the few.*

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# Focus of Brexit negotiations must be on securing transitional deal – First Minister Carwyn Jones

“A year on from the EU referendum it is becoming increasingly clear that it will be impossible to both negotiate a withdrawal agreement and put in place the basis for a future relationship with the EU within 2 years,”

Mr Jones said.

“Therefore the priority in negotiations with the EU must now be on agreeing transitional arrangements to come into effect in April 2019. This will be vital in helping reduce the uncertainty around Brexit, which is damaging to the economy.”

Despite an eventful and often challenging year, the Welsh Government’s Brexit position has remained clear and consistent from the day immediately after the referendum; that the result must be respected and the economy must come first.

The First Minister said:

“Our 6 point plan was greeted with raised eyebrows when we proposed it the morning after the referendum, but it has stood the test of time and has formed the basis for our white paper, Securing Wales’ Future.

“Our balanced and coherent approach to leaving the EU, which puts economic interests at the heart of the agenda, is the closest thing the UK has to a realistic negotiating position, which meets the needs of all regions of the UK.”

Looking back at the past 12 months, the First Minister spoke about the Welsh Government’s achievements in their Brexit approach – from convening an exceptional meeting of the British Irish Council in July last year, launching our white paper – Securing Wales’ Future and the subsequent policy paper on Brexit and Devolution, establishing the European Advisory Group and the Agriculture and Environment Roundtable Group, developing the Business Confidence Plan, and also seeking assurances from the UK Government that our departure from the EU will not negatively impact on our NHS and universities.

The First Minister added:

“It is clear our white paper has influenced the UK government’s approach in important areas such as upholding existing employment rights and the crucial importance of transitional arrangements. We have also secured guarantees from the UK government that they will replace the EU funding Wales would have received up to 2020.

“The uncertainty and instability the UK government has allowed to develop over the past year is now being compounded by the ongoing chaos around the Prime Minister. With no mandate, no clear negotiating strategy and a cabinet riven with disagreement over how we should approach Brexit, the UK government must prioritise transitional arrangements to ensure that the Britain’s interests are best served.”