

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister of Scotland



Scottish Government  
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Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM  
First Minister of Wales  
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23 November 2016

Dear Carwyn

Thank you for copying me your letter of 28 October, following the JMC(P) meeting, to the Prime Minister. I share your concerns about the range of issues you highlight and it is important that the Devolved Administrations continue to draw these to the attention of the UK Government.

As you know, I have been very clear that I want the UK to stay in the single market and so, to the extent that the Scottish Government can wield any influence, we will try to help steer the UK Government away from a hard Brexit.

My priority is, of course, to protect Scotland's interests and maintain our links with the EU. We are currently examining possible options for doing this and will publish proposals before the end of the year, aimed at protecting Scotland's place in the single market.

I expect our proposals will mirror many of the substantive issues you set out in your letter, particularly in relation to the single market and migration, and to the position of EU nationals currently living in Scotland, and those who might choose to make their homes here in the future.

On the broader consequences of exiting the EU, I very much support the comments you made on 24 June, and your similar comments since, that

*withdrawal from the EU is a massive constitutional shift for the UK and it has equally far-reaching implications for the devolution settlement. The relationship between Devolved Administrations and the UK Government must now be placed onto an entirely different footing.*

It is clear to me that whatever the eventual shape of the UK's exit from the EU, and Scotland's constitutional position in relation to the UK and the EU, it would not be acceptable

for the outcome to be a greater concentration of powers at Westminster. You mention social, environmental and employment protections which are important examples of these.

In your letter to the Prime Minister, you agree the importance of maintaining the integrity of the UK internal market, and making the UK work effectively. You suggest there are areas where a UK framework may be necessary. In all cases I believe it would be appropriate for powers to be held with the devolved governments and that if a UK wide framework is beneficial, we are then able to develop policy jointly rather than face the repeated challenges of seeking to influence UK government policy development.

As you say, in existing devolved areas there would have to be agreement between the four administrations – and we must clearly guard against any attempts to reserve current devolved powers as a result of the UK exiting the EU. On reserved matters, I note your language of “shared sovereignty”, which is interesting. I would go further and say that substantially greater devolution is required as a consequence of the UK exiting the EU, to protect Scotland’s interests securely, and to ensure the diffusion of powers across these islands, avoiding the risk of concentration at Westminster. We will be developing our thinking on the consequences for the devolution settlements of the UK exiting the EU in our published proposals.

I very much welcome the excellent working relationship Michael Russell and Mark Drakeford have established and I hope to be able to share some of our thinking in those areas of joint interest, closer to the publication of our proposals.

I also look forward to meeting you at the British Irish Council Summit on 25 November .

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

**NICOLA STURGEON**