# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Welsh Government response to the initial UK and EU negotiation mandates** |
| **DATE** | **11 February 2020** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Counsel General and Brexit Minister** |

On Monday 3 February, the Prime Minister made a speech in Greenwich which outlined the opening position of the UK in the negotiation of the UK’s future relationship with the EU. The Government also issued a [Written Statement](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-future-relationship-between-the-uk-and-the-eu) on its objectives for the negotiations.

The Prime Minister’s approach would appear to move decisively away from that signalled in the Political Declaration which it signed with the European Union only three months ago. In particular, it emphasises an unwillingness to contemplate a broad, inclusive framework covering all aspects of our future relations in favour of a set of separate agreements as well as an absolute rejection both of making ‘level playing field’ commitments and of allowing any role for the Court of Justice of the European Union.

It is an approach which appears to prioritise the political goal of demonstrating the UK’s complete separation from the EU above a pragmatic, common sense focus on what is in the UK’s economic interests. As such, it risks causing deep damage to Wales’ essential trade with Europe that would have a real impact on people’s jobs and businesses.

On the same day (3 February), the European Commission published its proposals for the [EU's negotiating mandate](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Finfo%2Fsites%2Finfo%2Ffiles%2Fcommunication-annex-negotiating-directives.pdf&data=02%7C01%7CPaul.Casey%40gov.wales%7C00e3996652c44d2fc0b108d7a8adb316%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637163336306277433&sdata=e%2FDsqxioB5LlSf%2BBk7vE3oma7dFfueGdnPtTBi%2F0J0c%3D&reserved=0). This reiterates the EU’s ambition to have a broad and deep future partnership with the UK in line with the Political Declaration. The proposal also makes clear that such a relationship will have to be based on a balance of rights and obligations and ensure a level playing field.

Taken at face value, the two statements suggest it may be very difficult to reach rapid agreement in the forthcoming negotiations, despite the determination of the UK Government to end the transition period on 31 December 2020.

The UK initial position is clearly at odds with the priorities we recently published on 20 January in our latest White Paper, [The Future UK/EU Relationship: Negotiating Priorities for Wales](https://gov.wales/the-future-uk-eu-relationship-negotiating-priorities-for-wales-html) and the UK Government has made little effort to take into account our views and concerns in publishing these objectives. As a Government, we recognise that our future economic relationship with the EU will be based on a Free Trade Agreement but we continue to believe that, given the significance of EU markets to our businesses, the UK must seek the fullest access to the EU’s market, eliminating tariffs, and minimising non-tariff barriers.

The coming weeks will be critical for the development of the UK’s detailed negotiating positions. Whilst waiting for the UK Government’s substantive response to our proposals for engagement, the First Minister and I will continue to press the UK Government to work with all governments of the UK to agree a mandate that protects the interests of all parts of the Union.