
UK IMPROVES OFFER TO RETURN DEVOLVED POWERS AFTER BREXIT, SCOTLAND WANTS MORE

-

22.02.2018

Reuters (22 February 2018)

EDINBURGH (Reuters) - Britains government has made a considerable offer to ensure all devolved powers transfer back to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland after Brexit, it said on Thursday, but a Scottish minister said it was not enough.

The Scottish and Welsh governments have accused the Westminster-based British government of mounting a power grab with its European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which will largely copy and paste EU legislation into British law.

They have sought assurances that the powers devolved to them in areas such as fishing, farming and the environment will return to them rather than to London when Britain leaves the EU in March 2019.

We have worked closely with the devolved administrations to find a way forward that respects the role of the devolved governments and ensures we are able to protect our vital UK internal market, David Lidington, Britains cabinet office minister, said in a statement.

The proposal that we have put on the table is a considerable offer that I hope the devolved administrations will engage with constructively.

The government said the changes it had made would mean that the vast majority of powers would automatically flow from the EU to the devolved administrations.

CONSENT

The British parliament must seek consent from the Scottish and Welsh assemblies when legislating on policy areas that overlap with their devolved powers. But both have declined to give their consent to the withdrawal bill because they say it fails to respect the devolution agreement made 20 years ago.

While they do not have a veto on Brexit legislation, ignoring them would stretch already tense relations with London, and could feed public appetite for Scottish independence.

Scottish and Welsh ministers and officials from Northern Ireland will discuss the amendments to the EU withdrawal bill with the British government later on Thursday.

I will be making it abundantly clear that we need to see further progress on safeguarding devolution, Scotlands Brexit minister Michael Russell said in a statement.

He added that Scotland would continue to argue for Britain to remain part of the EUs single market and customs union in order to limit the economic damage of Brexit - something Prime Minister Theresa Mays government in London has ruled out.

We are not opposed to UK-wide frameworks, when they are in Scotlands interest, but devolved powers can only be changed with the agreement of the Scottish parliament, said Russell.

Failing that commitment from the UK government, we will be unable to recommend consent to this legislation.

Reporting by Elisabeth O'Leary; Editing by Gareth Jones

Kaynak/Source: