

Justice Committee

Select Committee Press Release

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CROWN DEPENDENCIES ENGAGEMENT WITH BREXIT EXAMINED IN NEW JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Government has engaged well with the Crown Dependencies over Brexit, but more clarity is needed, says the Justice Committee in a report published today.

The Crown Dependencies

The Crown Dependencies are the Bailiwick of Jersey, the Bailiwick of Guernsey (itself containing the separate jurisdictions of Guernsey, Alderney and Sark) and the Isle of Man. They are not part of the UK—each has its own legal and political systems—but their historic relationship with the British Crown confers some constitutional duties upon the UK, including international representation. This constitutional relationship is managed by the Ministry of Justice.

The Crown Dependencies are not in the EU, but are part of its Customs Union—allowing them to trade goods freely with its Member States—under the UK's Act of Accession 1972. Their formal relationship with the EU will end with Brexit, though could be replaced by extension to them of any new UK-EU agreement.

Priorities in Brexit

Priorities for the outcomes of Brexit negotiations raised by governments and residents of Crown Dependencies in their evidence and discussion with the Committee include:

- protection of their financial services from EU blacklisting;
- retention of the Common Travel Area (CTA); and
- continued export opportunities in agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing.

Nevertheless, the primary priority in the aftermath of Brexit is to preserve their existing relationships with the UK, including their overarching

constitutional relationship. The Committee recommended that the Government reaffirm there will be no changes to these relationships.

Engagement and representation

The Government has taken steps to engage with the Crown Dependencies over Brexit, including a commitment from the Prime Minister that they will be “kept informed and offered the opportunity to contribute where it is relevant and appropriate to do so” and various Ministerial and official meetings. The Committee observed that this engagement may be more difficult to maintain as negotiations progress. It welcomed the Ministry of Justice’s commitment to its role in protecting high levels of engagement despite any such difficulties.

The Crown Dependencies have agreements with the UK on developing their international identity, but the Ministry of Justice said “these agreements should not however be mistaken for guarantees that the UK will always be in a position to represent Crown Dependency views internationally where those diverge from the UK’s own interests”. The Committee recommended that the Government clarify its position.

Committee Chair Bob Neill MP said: “The UK leaving the EU will affect the Crown Dependencies in many ways. The Government has engaged well with the Islands so far, and there is no current suggestion of any divergence between their and the UK’s interests in relation to Brexit negotiations. However, if one were to arise, the current approach is unclear in ways that might become unhelpful to the Islands, and we therefore ask the Government for clarification.”

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Committee Membership is as follows:

Robert Neill (*Conservative, Bromley and Chislehurst*) (*Chair*); Richard Arkless (*Scottish National Party, Dumfries and Galloway*); Alex Chalk (*Conservative, Cheltenham*); Alberto Costa (*Conservative, South Leicestershire*); Philip Davies (*Conservative, Shipley*); Kate Green (*Labour, Stretford and Urmston*); Mr David Hanson (*Labour, Delyn*); John Howell (*Conservative, Henley*); Victoria Prentis (*Conservative, Banbury*); Jo Stevens (*Labour, Cardiff Central*); Keith Vaz (*Labour, Leicester East*).

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