

# First Minister gives evidence on Europe



“We have got to have the option, if we cannot protect our interests within the UK, it would be wrong to deny people in Scotland whether independence would be a better position to protect those interests.

“But that is not the starting point.

“We will go into this in good faith. I do believe that the whole of the UK would be better served by being in the single market.”

This is a precis of evidence being given by the First Minister the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon to the European and External Relations Committee at Holyrood this afternoon.



The committee is looking at the referendum and its implications for Scotland. The First Minister said this morning that Brexit has not yet happened, but she finds it gobsmacking that three months on from the referendum simple questions about freedom of movement and the single market are unanswered by the UK Government.

Ms Sturgeon also emphasised that she is looking for Scotland to have a say in what actually happens. She said: “It seems to me given the different way that Scotland and Northern Ireland voted here, that the devolved nations should have a role here other than that of consultee.”

The committee under the convenership of Joan McAlpine MSP has issued an initial report. Ms McAlpine wrote in the foreword: “Ten weeks ago, 51.9% of those who voted in the EU referendum

voted to leave the EU. In Scotland, 62% of voters cast their vote to remain in the EU.

“The European and External Relations Committee immediately embarked on a programme of work to examine the implications of the vote for Scotland. This decision was made against the background of a vote in Parliament giving the First Minister authority to explore means of maintaining the benefits Scotland receives from its relationship with the EU.

“The period during which we carried out our deliberations has been characterised by uncertainty. The new Prime Minister has confirmed the binding nature of the result of the referendum, emphasising that “Brexit means Brexit”. She has indicated that the UK Government will not trigger the withdrawal process until 2017. It is unclear exactly what role the Scottish Government will have in shaping any deal. However, the UK Government has said it wants to hear views from Scotland and that the deal has to work for the UK as a whole. Our Committee can act as a useful forum so we have taken the decision to publish this, initial report based on the evidence gathered this summer. We will send it to both the UK and the Scottish Governments.”

Photos courtesy of Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament