

Brexit means Brexit

So today at 11.00pm the UK will leave the European Union which it has been a member of for 47 years.

Whatever your political colours, it is a big day. We are told the Prime Minister will make an address to the nation. The next important date is 31 December 2020 when the transition period during which a deal with the EU is to be negotiated should be sealed.

A series of activities signalling The Scottish Government's desire to remain close to the European Union will be undertaken today, Friday 31 January 2020, as they remind us that Scotland is taken out of the EU without its consent.

The First Minister will write an open letter to Europe, which will be published across the EU.



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP speaking during the Scottish Government Debate in the name of Nicola Sturgeon on Scotland's Future flanked by Mike Russell the Brexit secretary 29 January 2020 . Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament
Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional Relations Michael Russell, who delivered a statement on Brexit in the Scottish Parliament yesterday, will attend a European Movement event in Edinburgh.

He will be urging Europe to #LeaveALightOn for Scotland, until

the country can determine its own future.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and the External Affairs Fiona Hyslop will chair a meeting of European consular corps in Edinburgh.

Ms Hyslop will also attend a meeting at the French Institute in Edinburgh to discuss future collaborations and common interests.

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Jeane Freeman is to issue a letter of thanks and reassurance to EU nationals working in the health and social care services.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney is to visit Dundee University to meet with EU students.

Two Scottish Government buildings in Edinburgh, St Andrew's House and Victoria Quay, will be lit in blue and yellow, the colours of the European flag.

In addition, the European flag will be flown at St Andrew's House and Victoria Quay, as well as at Scotland House in Brussels.

Mr Russell said: "For the majority of Scotland, today is not a day of celebration, it is a day for the sad and sombre acknowledgement that Scotland is being forced to leave the European Union against its will.

"Therefore it is fitting to mark the occasion, and to reassert our desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with our European friends around our many shared values and interests in the future.

"We believe Scotland has the right to choose its own future and that the best option for this country is to be independent, within the European Union.

"Until that day comes, we ask that Europe leave a light on for

Scotland.”

Speaking ahead of the UK’s departure from the EU this evening, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said: “We will leave the EU at 11.00pm tonight, finally honouring the result of the referendum three and a half years ago.

“I know that Scotland, and the rest of the UK, will flourish outside of the EU – our coastal communities will leave the hated common fisheries policy, our farmers will benefit from a system of funding that works for them and we will strike lucrative trade deals around the globe, opening up new markets for Scotland’s world class businesses. We will take back control of our borders, our laws and our money, allowing us to invest in the ambitious infrastructure projects the UK needs.

“We will build a stronger economy, creating opportunity and prosperity for everyone. We will move forward together, as one United Kingdom, to a bright future.

“It’s time for Nicola Sturgeon to drop her constant demands for independence, and instead work with us to ensure a prosperous future for Scotland.”



Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard MSP speaking during the Scottish Government Debate in the name of Nicola Sturgeon on Scotland's Future. 29 January 2020 . Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard said: "Britain is leaving the European Union today. I campaigned to stay in the EU. Had Labour won the recent general election, we would have given the final say back to the people, and I would be campaigning in that referendum to remain.

"Scotland is at a crossroads, as Boris Johnson pursues a hard-right Tory Brexit based on a narrow English nationalism, and Nicola Sturgeon tells us the only alternative is a separate Scottish state. But there is another way. I firmly believe that the only way to bring our divided country together is in establishing a new Home Rule principle fit for the twenty first century.

"That would mean that in the wake of Brexit all that can be devolved is devolved, and not just to the Scottish Parliament but to local government and to local communities across

Scotland. It is a vision of a modern 2020 Home Rule which recognises that we need to radically redistribute wealth and power by tackling inequalities, rather than simply reproducing them in a separate Scottish state.

“And as we leave the European Union, we must today pledge to renew Scotland’s commitment to international solidarity, to welcoming refugees and to standing firmly against racism and intolerance. Some of my earliest political action was through the anti-racist movement, and we must re-build and re-energise that movement so it can take on the new guises adopted by the old prejudices.

“By bringing power as close as possible to the people, we can heal the divisions in our country, build mutual understanding and support between our communities, and build a fairer, welcoming and tolerant Scotland.”