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UK Elections 2011 : Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Alternative Vote Referendum

18 June 2013.

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Foreword by Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales

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- 1 2011 was a very exciting year for the devolved nations of the UK. It was a particularly good year for Wales as the public voted yes in the referendum on extending the powers of the National Assembly.
- 2 As has frequently been said, Devolution is a process not an event, and this is certainly true in the Welsh context. We have come a long way since 1997 when just 50.3% of the people of Wales voted in favour of devolution. As a result of the 2011 referendum, the National Assembly, originally established with limited powers to make subordinate legislation, now is able to make primary legislation for Wales in twenty broadly-defined areas of domestic policy. A Welsh Government, accountable to the Assembly and responsible for a budget approaching £15bn per annum, makes decisions affecting the day to day lives of Welsh people. I am extremely proud to have been a part of this pro-

cess, and am even more proud to be involved in carving out the new constitutional path that is emerging in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom.

- 3 The first decade of devolution was a learning curve for us all. It was a time when we developed distinctive policies, tailoring our commitments and achievements to the needs of the people we served. Each and every part of the United Kingdom has learnt valuable lessons over the past ten years which have helped develop the governance of the nations. We can all proudly look back on our achievements and use them to help us look forward.
- 4 The future of devolution, and indeed of the United Kingdom, is far from certain. The referendum on Scottish independence will not only have immense consequences for the future of Scotland, it will have a profound effect on the future of devolution in Wales and its place within the Union. That is why I am pleased to support the review of devolution in Wales currently being undertaken by the Silk Commission. I hope that the Commission will recommend the changes necessary for devolution in Wales to develop further. I also hope that the Commission reinforces the work of the Holtham Commission on financial reform and helps us put the funding arrangements for the devolved institutions in Wales on a fairer footing.
- 5 I am calling for all these constitutional issues to be discussed as part of a national constitutional convention. I therefore welcome this publication and the opportunity it provides to discuss the results of the referendum in Wales and the elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland. We are about to enter an extremely challenging period in the United Kingdom's constitutional history; the decision we make in the next few years will have repercussions for decades to come. The more we think about and discuss these issues, the more likely it is that we can create a new constitutional path that will meet the needs of an ever changing Union.

Carwyn Jones

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