

UK would partly control Wales Brexit cash - Labour

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## UK would partly control Wales Brexit cash – Labour

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Labour's most senior Westminster politician in Wales says the Welsh government will not have full control over the replacement for European Union funds, should the party win the general election.

Shadow Welsh secretary Jo Stevens told BBC Radio Wales Breakfast that both the UK and Welsh governments would have a role.

Sir Keir Starmer has previously said that he would restore decision-making powers to the Welsh government over millions worth of grants to help boost Wales' economy.

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But the party's manifesto on Thursday said that "representatives" of Wales would be given the power to make decisions, without clarifying who.

The Welsh Conservatives said it was focused on empowering people across Wales, while Plaid Cymru accused Labour of snubbing the Welsh government.

Last year, Sir Keir promised Welsh Labour conference that Wales would have control over its "economic destiny".

"The decision-making role for the Welsh government on structural funds, will be restored," he said.

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BBC Wales was told that Labour's plans, should they win the election, would work much like the EU scheme had in the past.

Speaking on Friday, Ms Stevens said: "It's exactly the same as Keir Starmer said in Welsh Labour conference.

"Both the UK government and Welsh government under the old EU funding... had a role. It's not a binary choice, one or the other."

Asked if control will go fully to the Welsh government, she said: "No, as I said, it's not a binary choice.

"It's changed from the current circumstances where the Welsh government has absolutely no say in how the Shared Prosperity Funds are delivered in Wales."

She said the Tories were going to "raid" the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) – for the "gimmick" of the national service proposals, "so that Wales loses out with millions of pounds".

The Welsh government had administered the EU grants – known as structural funds – while the UK was in the EU.

The UK government with the EU had negotiated their level and how much went to Wales.

After Brexit, the UK government set up the SPF which it has controlled rather than ministers in Cardiff.

That has caused a row with Welsh government who have accused them of rolling back devolution.

The funds are worth £343m a year to Wales, according to recent figures from the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS).

The Conservatives have controversially suggested scrapping the scheme all together to fund its national service plan - something the IFS have said would leave Wales £275m worse off.

A spokesman for the Welsh Conservatives in the Senedd said: "While Labour bicker over whether to empower Welsh government ministers, the Welsh Conservatives are focused on empowering people across Wales."

Plaid Cymru's Liz Saville Roberts said: "This latest Labour U-turn shows that Keir Starmer's party is taking Wales for granted.

"Members of the Labour Welsh government must be livid at this latest snub from their London bosses." efaul

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**Date Created** June 14, 2024 Author admin