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Brexit Strategic Group to discuss further no deal planning

The Brexit Strategic Group set up by the Gibraltar Government will be meeting tomorrow Tuesday in order to discuss the degree of contingency planning for a no deal Brexit going forward. This follows the decision taken in the United Kingdom last week to wind down plans for leaving the European Union without a Withdrawal Agreement in place.

The Brexit Strategic Group is chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia and includes the Chief Secretary Darren Grech, Attorney General Michael Llamas, Collector of Customs John Rodriguez, Chief Scientist Liesl Mesilio, Parliamentary Counsel Paul Peralta, Principal Secretary to the DCM Caine Sanchez and Civil Contingencies Coordinator Ivor Lopez.

The United Kingdom and the European Union agreed a second extension last week to our departure from the EU. This was originally scheduled to take place on 29 March. It was then extended to 12 April and then extended further still until 31 October. However, the United Kingdom could leave before that date if the Westminster Parliament approves the Withdrawal Agreement.

The six different Brexit groups established by the Government had been gearing up for our departure from the European Union on 12 April. These groups cover commerce, critical services, health and social care, law and order, public services and the supply chain. There has been a huge amount of interdepartmental work within Gibraltar and also at an intergovernmental level with the United Kingdom.

Twenty-four Technical Notices have been issued so far for public information. These have covered topics which affect most citizens like passports, driving licences and healthcare. Some of the Technical Notices have covered more specific areas of interest to the business community like financial services, EU funding and the recognition of professional qualifications. The Government also decided to place advertisements in the Gibraltar press in the run-up to 12 April which provided a shorter and sharper summary of the position in case of a no deal Brexit.

The information exercise has also included detailed briefings on the contingency plans of the Government to a number of relevant stakeholders, sometimes lasting more than two hours. This has included the Brexit Select Committee of the Gibraltar Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition separately, the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Hindu Merchants Association. There have been countless meetings with individual entities and organisations.



A huge volume of legislation has also had to be put in place in order to prepare the legal framework for our departure from the European Union. Parliament has passed the European Union (Withdrawal) Act and a number of other pieces of legislation as Brexit has taken over the agenda.

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The Government has been preparing to leave the European Union with a Withdrawal Agreement and preparing for a no deal Brexit at the same time. This means that two different work-streams have run parallel to each other. The volume of work has been intense and it has affected virtually every area of the public administration. The Government is very grateful to all those who have been involved in this work in the public sector and also to the private sector who have been very positive in their engagement.

It is important to make the point that the work in the lead-up to a no deal Brexit has been very useful. Data has been compiled, different scenarios have been analysed and table-top exercises have taken place. This work will not be in vain. It will stand us in good stead for 31 October or even for 31 December 2020 and means that Gibraltar is now better prepared than ever before.

The overall political situation in the United Kingdom is nonetheless very fluid which means that a referendum or the revocation of article 50 cannot be ruled out.”