



PRESS RELEASE

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Government plans for all Brexit outcomes at the end of the year

The Government continues to plan for all eventualities as negotiations continue to define a future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union before the transitional period comes to an end on 31 December. In this context, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia chaired a meeting of the Brexit Strategic Group late last week in order to provide added impetus to plans for no agreement between the parties.

It is important to make the point that this does not mean that there will be no agreement. It simply means that the Government has a duty to prepare for different possible outcomes and that this is one of them. Indeed, the Government is confident that a good economic partnership can be agreed that will greatly benefit Gibraltar in the context of our involuntary departure from the EU and that such a partnership can produce an area of shared prosperity for the whole of the region around Gibraltar also.

Separate work-streams, running in parallel to each other, have continued to operate over the last few years, even through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, this work covers the commitments entered into in relation to the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, the Gibraltar Protocol and the accompanying MoUs. This framework ensured the orderly departure of Gibraltar from the European Union and our inclusion in the transition.

Second, there is ongoing work between the Gibraltar and United Kingdom Government in relation to the Future Relationship with the European Union in the context of the Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) and other side agreements.

Third, there is a work-stream which concentrates on future trade deals which the UK is negotiating with non-EU countries.

Fourth, there is work on an ambitious future relationship between Gibraltar and the European Union, including with our nearest EU neighbour Spain. The first formal round of discussions between Gibraltar, the United Kingdom and Spain took place in Malaga on 9 June in a positive and constructive atmosphere. This team is headed by the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo and includes the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia, the Attorney General Michael Llamas and the Financial Secretary Albert Mena. It will be recalled that the Chief Minister subsequently met the Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya in Algeciras on 23 July during her Brexit-related visit to the Campo area.



A fifth stream of work is no-deal planning, which was the basis of the meeting last week. This reviewed the output from the Brexit Executive Group, which included all the different specialist resilience groups tasked with specific topic areas and which is normally chaired by the Chief Secretary.

The Deputy Chief Minister briefed the meeting on different aspects of the wider UK/EU negotiations. He explained that three more rounds were planned. These would be round 7 in Brussels the week of 17-21 August, round 8 in London on 7-11 September and round 9 in Brussels on 28 September – 2 October. The Chief Negotiators David Frost and Michel Barnier were expected to meet in between as required.

The meeting found that the no-deal planning work which had been carried out in 2018 and 2019 had been very useful and, in some areas, served as a dress rehearsal for the COVID-19 pandemic. This was particularly so in relation to the stock-piling of materials by the GHA and the setting-up of an oxygen plant at the hospital for example. In other instances, departments and agencies had drawn up detailed action plans for a no deal Brexit which were then adopted to deal with COVID also.

The Deputy Chief Minister asked for an update on a review he had requested of all the Technical Notices and no deal advice that the Government has issued so far. This is being conducted by the Director of the Brussels Office Daniel D’Amato together with the Civil Contingencies Coordinator Ivor Lopez.

A number of different reports were put forward to the meeting by the Chief Secretary, the GHA, the Port Authority, the Royal Gibraltar Police, HM Customs, the Department of the Environment and the Gibraltar Law Officers on legislation issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who is responsible for work related to our departure from the European Union, said:

“The Government continues to plan for all outcomes because this is the responsible thing to do. It is obvious that the greater the planning the more likely that concerns are identified and solutions are found. The issues are narrower as we progress to 31 December and all the work carried out so far is expected to be very useful if there is no agreement. There are alternative methods and mechanisms that the Government is putting in place, both in a legal and in practical sense, which will come into play in the event that we lose our existing EU framework. The Government is very grateful to the civil service, the public service and our agencies and authorities for the positive way in which everyone has put the shoulder to the wheel for the wider benefit of Gibraltar.”