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9 August 2019

Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
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Dear Prime Minister,

Personal Preparations for a No-Deal Brexit

I am writing to you as a British citizen who is about to be put through an untested and unapproved process by the British Government. It is a process I did not sign up for (and, I believe, nobody has been able to sign up for); but we are nonetheless about to be subjected to this poorly anticipated, and therefore largely unplanned, event. I refer, of course, to a No-Deal Brexit.

I do not ask for the evidence of why you feel this process is necessary or supported by the UK population, I have a much simpler request: what should I, personally, do to prepare?

Your government is spending a large amount of money in an attempt to mitigate the worst effects that will be produced by leaving the EU without any identifiable plan for the future, and you are also instructing UK businesses on what they can do to reduce the economic shock of Brexit for themselves and the State. You clearly believe that a No-Deal Brexit is a major and defining event in the history of the UK; yet you have, so far, given the citizens of this country no indication of how they should be preparing for their own B-day. So I ask again: what should I, personally, do to prepare?

I hope that, in your reply, you will address several specific points which, I believe, will help me to personally mitigate the effects of Brexit.

1. What goods should I stockpile? I have heard that there is no available warehouse space left, so the logical solution is to get people to stockpile in their own homes. But what should I include in my stockpile?
2. Where should I place my money? Obviously, the UK economy will be taking a hit from this process, but are there areas of the economy where the "hit" from Brexit will be less? Are you able to recommend UK industries I can safely support, or should I just transfer all my funds out of the UK? As these funds include my pension, it is vital that I am able to make correct decisions based on reliable information.

3. What steps are the British Government intending to take in the event of a breakdown of law and order, and what will be expected of citizens in that circumstance? Should I begin my application for an Irish passport to ensure my personal safety after Brexit?

Please do not treat this letter frivolously, it is a serious request. I am a UK pensioner who has lived through many economic and political upheavals, and I have never before felt the need to ask the three questions above. A No-Deal Brexit is of a different order from all the chaotic events I have lived through in the past, and exceptional chaos requires exceptional planning. I know you hope your preparations for a No-Deal Brexit will be sufficient, but you provide no evidence that this will be the case. Which means that every individual should be making their own preparations. The answers to the questions above are what I need to make mine.

Yours sincerely

Martin Edwardes
BSc MA PhD, FRAI

cc Lyn Brown MP
Jo Swinson MP

A reply was received (see below). Basically, nothing can possibly go wrong. It seems likely we will see that promise put to the test.

Bogus has a habit of resetting the expiry date on cast-iron promises on a regular basis, so... we shall see.

Meanwhile, enjoy the fact that response was not presented as “justified” text but as “ragged right”.



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Our ref: TO2019/07484

October 2019

Dear Martin Edwardes,

Thank you for your email of 9 August 2019 to the Prime Minister regarding your concerns about No Deal. Your letter has been passed to the Department for Exiting the European Union as it falls under our remit. I apologise for the delay in responding.

We would, of course, prefer to leave the EU on 31 October with a deal and we will continue to work in an energetic and determined way to get a deal. We are very willing to sit down with the Commission and EU Member States to talk about what needs to be done to achieve that. We will seek a deep Free Trade Agreement that allows us to be in control over our own laws.

If there is to be an actual negotiation however, it will in the end require movement from the EU and a willingness to reopen the previous Withdrawal Agreement which has three times been rejected by the UK Parliament. Any deal must involve the abolition of the anti-democratic backstop. The problem with the old deal which the EU is insisting upon is that it could make the UK a rule-taker for ever. Many of our laws and our taxes would be decided by Brussels not the UK Parliament, and the people of Northern Ireland would have no say in rules covering large swathes of their economy. It would actually be harder for us to exit the new arrangement than it is to leave the EU itself.

If it is not possible to reach a deal we will have to leave with no deal, and the Government is committed to preparing for this outcome. We are better prepared than many think and we are stepping up preparations. We will make all necessary preparations to do so, and all necessary funding will be made available.

Food supply in the event of a no deal

I would like to reassure you that the United Kingdom has a high degree of food security and a highly-resilient food supply chain, built on access to a range of sources including strong domestic production and imports from other countries. This will continue to be the case when we leave the EU, with or without a deal. The Government is meeting weekly with industry and retailers to make sure we are prepared for all scenarios as we leave the EU.

With the situation at the border, the Government's objective is to ensure that movement of goods through ports is as frictionless as possible. In the event of a no deal exit, we will prioritise flow and keep any increase in the number of checks at the border to a minimum, helping to reduce disruption to supply of goods, including food products, at locations such as Kent.

The Government has published further information regarding our approach to tariffs in the event of a no deal exit. This confirms that in such a scenario the UK would implement a temporary tariff regime, which would apply for up to 12 months while a full consultation, and review on a permanent approach, is undertaken. This regime has been designed to mitigate price impacts on consumers and minimise costs to business, while also supporting UK producers. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-tariff-regime-for-no-deal-brexite-published>

Economy:

As we leave the EU, the UK economy is fundamentally strong – wages are rising, employment is at a record high and the UK economy is forecast to grow faster than Germany, Italy and Japan this year. We want a friendly and constructive future relationship, as constitutional equals, and as friends and partners, with the EU. It will be a relationship based on a deep Free Trade Agreement. It is one where we will have left the customs union so we will have control of our own trade.

We are better prepared than many think. We are turbo charging preparations and all necessary funds will be found. The Treasury has now made available £6.3 billion to prepare for EU exit, including £4.2 billion funding this financial year alone.

The Government would of course take economic measures to mitigate any short-run disruption, support the economy through the transition, and to boost the long-term potential of the UK economy, taking advantage of the opportunities available outside the EU.

In these circumstances, the financial settlement in the Withdrawal Agreement would no longer apply, and so we would have available a significant amount of the original £39 billion to help deal with any consequences.

Once we have left the EU, we will have the ability to strike trade deals around the world. By bringing back control over our money, borders and laws we can construct a brighter future for our country and society as a whole. No matter what approach we take, the UK economy will continue to grow into the future.

The Government has engaged extensively with businesses over the last two years and we understand the uncertainty that would be faced by UK nationals in the event of a no deal scenario. We have always acted to ensure that UK nationals can continue to live their lives broadly as they do now, and that remains our objective in a deal and no deal scenario.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,
DExEU Correspondence Team