

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

26th September 2019

Local Resilience Forum Chairs

By e-mail

Dear Colleagues

PREPARING FOR BREXIT – CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS FOR YELLOWHAMMER

Dear Colleagues,

When I wrote to you in July I promised to update you on progress with our plans to re-activate Operation Yellowhammer and the scaling up of operations ahead of the 31 October Brexit deadline.

The risk of the UK leaving the EU without a deal remains very real, even though Parliament has passed an Act to try and prevent such a prospect. While the Act requires the Prime Minister to write to the EU requesting an extension to Article 50 until the end of January 2020, if the form of the UK leaving the EU has not been agreed by Parliament by 19 October 2019 all 27 Member States must agree to the extension. That cannot be guaranteed.

So, until we know for certain that an extension has been agreed, the risk of a no deal exit by 31 October remains a very real prospect. Even an extension to enable further negotiations about a possible Withdrawal Agreement might do no more than delay the risk of a no deal exit by a few months.

Regardless of events in Westminster, until we can be absolutely sure we will not be exiting the EU without a deal at the end of October, Welsh Ministers are determined that we and our public service partners must continue to plan for that possibility and put in place appropriate Command, Control and Co-ordination (C3) arrangements to monitor the impacts and to enable us to respond accordingly.

Given the very significant resources required to operationalise our Brexit plans, Ministers have agreed the Resilience Team immediately shifts its entire focus to prioritise this work and support the re-activation of Operation Yellowhammer. Other routine business will be put on hold. These arrangements follow the pattern of those established earlier in the year, with the

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We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.



Parc Cathays • Cathays Park
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

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team remaining available to respond to incidents and to cover limited other work deemed to be critical.

We are now at the point where we need to use the civil contingencies networks to plan for immediate and direct impacts around the period of the EU Exit. These preparations will cover large-scale situations that might cause significant damage or disruption to human welfare, national security, the economy or the environment.

I mentioned in my previous letter that we would be building our planning arrangements around 4 key areas. We are continuing to make progress on these areas as follows:

Risk and planning activities

The Wales Risk Group, as with the previous operation, has developed local and national scenarios and risk assessments based on the Cabinet Office worst case scenario planning assumptions. They are in the process of finalising a national Wales level risk assessment which can be used to inform policy planning and mitigation. The Group met on 18th September and will make their findings known shortly. Our intention is to publish a summary of these findings in line with the release of the UK Government Planning Assumptions and the Welsh Government Action Plan.

Command, Control and Co-ordination (C3)

Following the de-brief we held with the Local Resilience Fora in May we have made minor adjustments to our previous structures to improve the flow of information and to fit with the UK government approach. As last time, we have based the C3 arrangements on the tried and tested arrangements we have established in Wales under the Pan-Wales Response Plan.

Training and Exercising

To ensure that everyone working within the C3 structure is familiar with the reporting requirements and processes we will be running a series of workshops and exercises in preparation for the operation going live. To start this process we have organised a second national workshop on 4 October to consider the completed risk assessment and to set out the C3 arrangements, the situation reporting process and the daily rhythm as well as running a short table top exercise.

To test our capability to respond urgently to any potential concurrent incident during the time Yellowhammer is active, a further Exercise Wales Connect will be run sometime in early October focusing on SCG activation arrangements.

We are also looking to run a situation reporting exercise with the LRFs on 16 October (Exercise Recap) to test a revised reporting template and the various processes which support it. This will be run following the Welsh Government's involvement in a major 2-day Yellowhammer exercise involving Whitehall Departments and Impact Groups.

Resources

Running a potentially sustained operation will require significant resources. The Welsh Government has already identified over 200 people to work as part of the ECC(W) or as part of our London team. We appreciate the pressures such commitments make on the LRFs where many involved will also have to continue with their day-to-day work. I hope the £500k

we have provided the 4 LRFs can be used in a constructive way to help each area meet its commitment to the operation.

Timetable

It is our intention to activate the ECC(W) from **7 October** to embed the Resilience Team and other staff in the centre and to ensure its functionality. Staff will already be in place for the UK exercise and will continue to operate from the Centre until further notice. The ECC(W) will escalate operations on **21 October** and it will be from this date that we will be asking for the first situation reports to be submitted by the LRFs to the ECC(W) and each day from that time. We wish all reports to be with us **before 17.00 hours each day**.

We will move to 24/7 operations at the ECC(W) from **28 October**.

The timetable will be kept under review based on possible amendments at the London side but we will keep you informed of any potential changes.

The Resilience Team will provide more details of our planning arrangements at the workshop on 4 October but if you have any issues you would like to raise with us at this stage please contact the Resilience Team on emergencies.security@gov.wales

Although it is impossible to predict how the political position will look in late October we must progress our planning on the basis that we will be leaving the EU without a deal and we must be fully prepared for that eventuality. I am grateful for your work over the Summer and your continuing help with implementing situational awareness processes; identifying issues and concerns; and devising responses. In order to be ready, our planning activity must be escalated from this point and I am confident that by the point of mobilisation we will be ready to deal with whatever the impact might be, both as individual organisations but also as a strong and coordinated set of public services.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

REG KILPATRICK
DIRECTOR FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT