

**Jeremy Miles AC/AM**  
Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol a Gweinidog Brexit  
Counsel General and Brexit Minister



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA/P/CG/1434/19

David Rees AM  
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23 April 2019

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter following my recent appearance before your Committee.

In your letter you highlight the potentially damaging impact that leaving the EU without a deal would have on the Welsh economy. As you know, we have always been clear that a “no deal” outcome would be catastrophic for the UK as a whole, but particularly for Wales, and have relentlessly pressed this point with UK Government. I am pleased that they seem finally to have accepted it is not a viable option, and also that the EU have agreed to a longer extension. However, a ‘no deal’ Brexit remains a real risk and as a responsible Government we will continue to plan for this outcome. This provides time for the UK Government to genuinely reach out and seek consensus, which the country so sorely needs. It is crucial that a resolution is found and we do not find ourselves approaching yet another cliff edge at the end of October.

I too welcome the Auditor General Wales’ report, which recognises the scale of the challenge the Welsh Government and its public service partners face in preparing for Brexit, against a very challenging and uncertain backdrop. The report recognises how we have responded to the challenge and references the clear lead that we have taken in planning for a no-deal Brexit. We have continued to show that leadership, and have recently arranged, through Academi Wales, a series of well-received events across Wales aimed at councillors and non-executive directors with a scrutiny role.

In your letter you asked for more information about a number of points raised in the Auditor General for Wales’ report.

## Local Authorities

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

In your letter you asked how the Welsh Government is addressing capacity issues in relation to Wales' Local Authorities ability to prepare for Brexit on top of the day job.

We have put in place structures to engage and communicate with local authorities. A Local Government EU Preparedness Advisory Panel meets every three weeks. Made up of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Panel is a forum for assessing preparedness progress and strengthens a coordinated and collaborative approach across Wales to provide the best solutions to Welsh citizens after Brexit. Panel members report that whilst levels of preparedness varies it has increased considerably in the last few months, particularly no-deal preparations.

In March, the Minister for Housing and Local Government announced £1.2 million to support local authorities in preparing for Brexit. £1m of that funding will go directly to each Local Authority to support an additional dedicated member of staff to work solely on Brexit issues. £200,000 will be used to support Local Authorities by extending the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) EU transition programme, which provides assessment, research and tools that benefits all Local Authorities.

As part of the Programme, the WLGA has commissioned Grant Thornton to carry out an analysis of local authority preparedness across Wales. The report can be accessed <https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=2230>. However in summary the report concludes that:

- There is a good level of assurance on preparedness, certainly for the short term, and of structures and planning in place.
- Brexit preparedness has developed significantly in the short period since WAO report was published three months ago.
- The EU Transition Programme toolkit has been a valuable and well used resource giving structure, confidence and consistency.
- There is a note of caution in the report that whilst authorities have done a good level of preparation the plans are of necessity un-tested given the on-going uncertainty.

## **Civil contingencies**

The Welsh Government has played an important leadership role in relation to civil contingencies in Wales and has worked over many months with the UK Government and the Welsh Local Resilience Fora on preventative measures for possible a no-deal Brexit.

In your letter, you requested more detail about the additional £500,000 announced to support the work of LRF. Primarily, the funding was allocated to assist LRF to monitor impacts of no a deal Brexit across agencies on a daily and 24/7 basis as required by implementing Command, Control and Coordination structures. While the funding will enable LRFs to meet specific local need, the funding can assist LRFs as appropriate with:

- Creating hubs for Brexit preparedness within the LRF area.
- Supporting LRFs to enhance existing arrangements and develop new procedures and plans to cover the response to exiting the EU, including testing arrangements.
- Providing resilient ICT to support communications between LRFs and central emergency control structures.
- Providing required training to staff and organisations working in the LRF.
- Providing the LRF with wider support on non-Brexit activities displaced by Brexit no deal planning to ensure a state of readiness for concurrent events.

## Communications

In your letter you also requested more information about the 'Paratoi Cymru/Preparing Wales' Brexit Portal.

The website sets out guidance and advice for citizens, organisations and a breadth of sectors across Wales about the steps that need to be taken to prepare for a no-deal Brexit. As well as providing advice from the Welsh Government, it signposts people and organisations to relevant advice from outside bodies on how to prepare, including guidance from the UK Government where appropriate.

Preparing Wales is promoted through a range of communications channels, including stakeholder engagement, press releases, twitter feeds and Ministerial media interviews. Also, every household in Wales has received or will shortly receive a leaflet promoting Preparing Wales and where to find the latest advice. Since 'Preparing Wales' was launched on 16<sup>th</sup> January, it has received a 26,839 unique page views.

In addition to the 'Preparing Wales' website, we have also created a Business Wales Brexit which has been developed to help Welsh businesses prepare for Brexit and navigate the changes and challenges ahead. The Portal provides up-to-date information and advice on a range of crucial issues for business. It also includes a diagnostic tool that helps businesses to identify how prepared they are for Brexit, recommends actions they should take to increase their resilience and signposts them to additional sources of support.

Since its launch in September 2018 the portal has been accessed by businesses 30,662 times, with around 65% of Welsh business having used the service.

We have undertaken a range of activities to promote the Business Wales Brexit portal including using social media channels (Business Wales and Sell2Wales), mailshots to Business Wales newsletter subscribers and, promotion via the main Business Wales website. There has also been an external Brexit marketing campaign including TV adverts, radio adverts and other advertising online.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work that the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee has done around preparations for what is, as you say in your letter, an unprecedented process.

Yours sincerely,



**Jeremy Miles AM**

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