

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHAIR OF THE
BREXIT REVIEW PANEL
ON TUESDAY 26TH MARCH 2019**

Since being reconvened after the 2018 election, the Brexit Review Panel has focused its work on the Government's preparedness for a Day One No Deal Brexit.

As it stands, it is still far from clear as to whether the UK will exit the EU with or without a deal, nor what the precise nature of its consequential implications for Jersey will be. The fact that such enormous uncertainty still remains so long after the triggering of Article 50, confirms that the island's Government was right to prepare for the worst-case scenario of the UK leaving without a deal.

Over these last months of work, the Panel, which consists of the Scrutiny Chairs sitting alongside two non-executive States Members, the Deputy of St Mary (Vice-Chair) and Deputy Higgins, has conducted public hearings with ministers, received briefings from officers, examined documents and corresponded with departments, all with the aim of assessing whether the government's preparations are likely to be sufficient to deal with the level of disruption that could potentially be caused by the UK leaving the EU in a sudden and disorderly fashion, as is expected in the event of a No Deal Brexit.

In undertaking our work, we were particularly keen to focus on the preparations being made to ensure the health system and vital supply lines would be protected from the effects of a No Deal Brexit and so able to continue providing medical services, food and other vital goods to the island. We have also investigated issues surrounding border control, policing and the introduction of the Settled Status scheme.

Overall, we have found that the government's preparations have struck the right balance between understanding the risks presented by Brexit and preparing for them in a manner that does not create excessive costs or disruption to existing ways of working.

Preparing for Brexit has however, already cost Jersey millions of pounds of taxpayers' money and if the UK does eventually leave the EU with a deal, some of this money and the preparations it has paid for will go to waste. The Panel is satisfied that this has been an unavoidable consequence of the UK's decision to leave the EU and that the island's government has tried to ensure that the potential for such waste is minimised.

The deep uncertainty caused by the triggering of Article 50 and the UK government's handling of negotiations has meant it is impossible to be fully prepared for all of the consequences of Brexit but the Panel is in no doubt that the government's response has been methodical and logical. Risks have been assessed and appropriate responses have been found to mitigate them.

Whilst we are all waiting in anticipation of the final outcome of the Article 50 process, we must not see the UK's eventual exit as the end of the Brexit saga. It will in fact, be just the beginning. It will be in the weeks and months after Brexit that the least likely but most disruptive risks could come to pass, so it is crucial that the government is alive to them and is ready to act quickly.

For this reason, the Panel has recommended that the Brexit Ministerial Group should, at a minimum, meet on a weekly basis in order to make a continuous assessment of the island's situation and to be in a position to offer immediate responses to a potentially fluid situation.

We have also recommended that the government continues to work with the fishing and aquaculture industries to seek a solution from the French government to the problem of border inspection posts. If unresolved, this issue could cause significant damage to an important business sector.

In terms of being able to go about our work, as a Panel, we were pleased with the access afforded to us by the relevant departments and the general willingness among officers and ministers to provide us with evidence and answers to our questions.

With this in mind, and on behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank those ministers and department officers who have enabled us to undertake our review. I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Scrutiny Officers who have supported us so diligently in our work. Personally, I would also like to thank my fellow panel members for their excellent work and dedication throughout the review.

As I speak today, we still don't know the manner of the UK's exit from the European Union. What we do know is that the island is as well prepared as it is ever likely to be and that we must all be ready as committed members of our island's community to continue working together with all islanders to ensure that Jersey emerges from Brexit stronger than ever and ready to make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead.