

Business Secretary holds first Brexit roundtable with businesses

Meeting in Westminster on 31 July 2019, senior representatives from businesses including Tate and Lyle Sugars, JML Group, Tangle Teezer, Laing O'Rourke, Scottish Power and 50 Cycles told the Business Secretary how they were ready and determined to seize the opportunities of a post-Brexit Britain. They explained that while there were some concerns about readiness for a no-deal Brexit, none of the issues were insurmountable and that they were keen to take up the chance to trade both with EU member states, and countries outside the EU.

Ms Leadsom urged the businesses present to speak with their colleagues and trade associations, to pass on the clear message that the government stands behind them and is ready to support efforts to prepare for Brexit. She also encouraged them to continue their positive approach to the future, and to talk about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

We are stepping up a gear and increasing the pace of our preparations as we get ready to leave the EU on 31 October.

The businesses I met with agreed that we must take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead: in innovation, new AI technologies, clean growth and the extraordinary scientific advances in which Britain is already leading the way. They also spoke about the benefits of doing away with certain EU red tape that has a stranglehold on productivity.

While there are challenges, business leaders were optimistic and clear that none are insurmountable.

Our preparations for no-deal will now be more open than ever, giving the business community the confidence to wave the flag for Britain and to seize the myriad of opportunities that lie ahead.

The main messages from business leaders present were:

- government should ramp up its communications to prepare for Brexit, welcoming the forthcoming publicity campaign to get ready to leave
- they are well prepared for Brexit on 31 October, but that this was often not acknowledged in public debate and commentary
- they were excited about the opportunities that lie ahead
 - trade with the Asian-Pacific economies
 - developing renewable energy, clean growth and electric vehicles
 - boosting foreign direct investment
 - attracting the best talent from around the world

- Brexit would provide an opportunity for colossal investment and to reform regulation of emerging technology, ensuring that Britain leads the world in big data and artificial intelligence

Ms Leadsom also met with Business Representatives Organisations on 1 August and will continue to meet with them on a fortnightly basis.

Keith Anderson, CEO, Scottish Power, said:

The meeting this morning with the Secretary of State was fantastic.

It's always great to have a government who come out and engage with business and listen to business and want to understand concerns and opportunities that businesses are bringing forward.

here are always great opportunities to invest in as a business.

Ken Daly, CEO, JML, said:

The meeting this morning was very positive, very informative.

I learnt a lot from the contributions of the other people around the table.

The general consensus was that Brexit is a great opportunity and businesses are reasonably well prepared.

Scott Snaith, CEO, 50cycles, said:

The meeting was very good. We covered a lot of ground. A lot of representation from all levels of business, from small to medium to large. It was really interesting hearing from some of the larger multi-nationals and also some of the smaller businesses as well.

I think we can take this opportunity to solidify our partnerships with our businesses overseas, as opposed to looking at them as a separate entity. I know our counterparts over in Europe are quite excited for Brexit and how we will move forward as a business, and as a country.

Full list of attendees at the 31 July roundtable:

- Ken Daly, CEO, JML Group
- Scott Snaith, CEO, 50 Cycles
- Kevin O'Neill, General Manager, General Electric
- Dave Armstrong, Group Business Development Director, BAE Systems
- Tom Crotty, Director, INEOS
- Keith Anderson, CEO, Scottish Power

- Tim Martin, Chairman, JD Wetherspoon
- Gerald Mason, Senior Vice President, Tate and Lyle Sugars
- Jonathan Leese, CFO, Tangle Teezer
- Jo Colman, Summerdown Mint
- Ben Hutchings, Sales and Marketing Director, Lye Cross Farm
- Madeleine Loughrey-Grant, Group Director, Legal & Tax, Laing O'Rourke plc

See more reaction from the [Secretary of State and businesses](#) present at the roundtable on our Twitter feed: [@beisgovuk](#)

Tips for businesses preparing for Brexit on 31 October:

Further information: [How to prepare if the uk leaves the EU with no deal](#)