

First Minister starts New Year with no-deal Brexit warning

In December, Mark Drakeford made clear his opposition to the prospect of a no-deal Brexit when he met Theresa May at Downing Street, claiming it would have 'seismic repercussions' for Wales.

With just 10 weeks to go until the UK leaves the EU, the First Minister confirmed the Welsh Government has further intensified its work on no-deal contingency planning as it becomes increasingly apparent the UK government has failed to negotiate an acceptable deal.

Mark Drakeford said:

"It is deplorable that 2019 opens with an unmistakable crisis over Brexit.

"We have been brought here by a UK government which has prioritised a vain attempt to hold the Conservative Party together above the national interest. The UK government has never attempted to build a cross-party consensus for its strategy and has never seriously tried to agree an approach to the negotiations with the devolved administrations. As a result, we are only 81 days away from crashing out of the EU without a deal.

"Such an outcome would be hugely damaging. Claims of a 'managed no-deal' need to be dismissed for the nonsense they are. Leaving without a deal would be hugely damaging and must be avoided.

"Our white paper, Securing Wales' Future, details a basis for a sane and rational approach to EU withdrawal. We cannot agree with an outcome which results in tariffs or other barriers which will make it harder for Welsh business to export, stoke inflation by increasing the costs of imports and, most seriously of all, disrupt the integrated pan-European supply chains that so many of our major employers rely on to thrive, and in some cases, survive.

"Under a no-deal Brexit the viability of the NHS and other public services will be severely compromised and our key economic sectors – agriculture and food production, hospitality, as well as highly skilled sectors and universities – are equally imperilled by a self-defeating migration policy.

"Many businesses have been making contingency plans for a long time. For those who haven't, now is the time to do so and our Brexit portal is the starting point for businesses who need to find out more. Likewise, every public body in Wales; local authorities, universities, health boards and others will be making preparations for a no-deal.

“However, make no mistake, it would be impossible to fully alleviate the effects of no-deal. It is simply not a viable option and must be avoided.

“Since the referendum we have found the UK government too opaque, too slow, and too secretive. Now is the time for full transparency and co-operation and the Welsh Government as a willing partner.”