

Government response: Statement from Minister of State for Asia on the Thai elections

I welcome the fact that elections have taken place in Thailand. It is encouraging to see so many Thai citizens seeking to have a say in their country's future.

It is important that any reported irregularities are investigated swiftly, fairly and transparently, to ensure credibility and provide a clear result as soon as possible.

The process of government formation should be conducted in a proper and open manner, and reflect what people voted for.

We look forward to working closely with the newly elected government.

Press release: New funding boost to support rural pubs

- Rural pubs to receive £188,000 to deliver additional services, including new Post Office facilities to children's play areas, as part of Pub is The Hub
- 76 new projects to be kick-started across England including new post office facilities to children's play areas
- Minister also calls on pub companies across the UK to help support their village locals

Rural pubs across England will be expanded to include Post Office facilities, grocery shops and libraries thanks to £188,000 of government funding.

Minister Jake Berry today (25 March 2019) announced 76 new projects will receive money through [Pub is The Hub](#), a ground-breaking organisation that supports rural pubs to diversify and help pubs bring communities together by expanding their services beyond food and drink.

Community Pubs Minister Jake Berry MP said:

Our pubs are at the heart of local communities supporting thousands of jobs and providing places for local residents to not only enjoy a pint, but also to get together.

The encouragement, advice and support given by the Pub is The Hub is proving invaluable in helping rural pubs expand their offer.

Pubs are not only places to drink but also home to essential community services and providing welcome meeting places to help tackle rural isolation.

John Longden, Chief Executive of Pub is The Hub said:

This funding will be welcomed by many projects and will be a huge boost for thousands of people living in, and visiting, rural communities.

Services and activities delivered by professional pub licensees (landlords) through their businesses can provide a wide range of benefits; basic groceries, library books, training courses, outlets for local suppliers and new jobs – all delivering improved levels of well-being through vital social connections.

Today, the minister will be writing to all the major players in the pubs and drinks industry, urging them to join government in supporting village locals right across the country.

Government support for Pub is The Hub now totals well over £500,000 and includes funding towards its Community Services Fund to help local pub licensees to better understand the needs of locals and deliver on these as best as possible.

Jointly funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and independent trust Power to Change, the More Than a Pub programme was a £4 million Community Pub Business Support programme established to help support community ownership of pubs in England.

More than 2,000 much loved pubs across England are listed as an Asset of Community Value giving them added protection, including regulars taking over the running of their local pub.

At Budget 2018, the government announced a third off eligible retailer's business rates bills for 2 years from April 2019 for properties with a rateable value below £51,000. This is available to a range of retail properties including pubs, worth an estimated £1 billion and will help community pubs to thrive.

Further information

The 76 projects who will receive money through Pub is The Hub are crucial to empowering local people across the country. To find out if there's a project near you visit [here](#):

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. [Request an accessible format.](#)

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email alternativeformats@communities.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

Pub is the Hub was set up in 2001 with the support of HRH the Prince of Wales, to help improve community services and activities in primarily rural areas.

The organisation is staffed mostly by volunteers and has worked with pub licensees, local authorities, local communities and industry partners to help hundreds of pubs across the country provide a wide range of services and facilities for their local communities.

The government has supported Pub is The Hub with over £500,000 of funding since 2013.

For more information on Pub is The Hub and how to access support for your local go to www.pubisthehub.org.uk

[Speech: PM statement on European Council: 25 March 2019](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a Statement on last week's European Council.

Before the Council, I wrote to President Tusk to seek formal approval for the legally-binding assurances on the Northern Ireland backstop and Alternative Arrangements agreed in Strasbourg on 11th March. I reported your Statement, Mr Speaker, which made clear that for a further Meaningful Vote to take place, the deal would have to be "fundamentally different – not different in terms of wording, but different in terms of substance."

I explained that, as a result, some Honourable and Right Honourable Members were seeking further changes to the Withdrawal Agreement.

And I requested a short extension to the Article 50 process to 30th June. I regret having to do so. I wanted to deliver Brexit on 29th March. But I am conscious of my duties as Prime Minister to all parts of our United Kingdom

and of the damage to that Union leaving without a deal could do when one part of it is without devolved government and unable therefore to prepare properly.

The Council formally endorsed the legal Instrument relating to the Withdrawal Agreement and the Joint Statement supplementing the Political Declaration.

This should increase the confidence of the House that the backstop is unlikely ever to be used, and would only be temporary if it is.

But the Council also reiterated, once again, its longstanding position that there could be no reopening of the Withdrawal Agreement.

So however the House decides to proceed this week, everyone should be absolutely clear that changing the Withdrawal Agreement is simply not an option.

Turning to extending Article 50, this has always required the unanimous agreement of the other 27 Member States.

As I have made clear before, it was never guaranteed that the EU would agree to an extension – or the terms on which we requested it.

And they did not.

Instead the Council agreed that if the House approves the Withdrawal Agreement this week, our departure will be extended to 11pm on 22nd May.

This will allow time for Parliament to pass the Withdrawal Agreement Bill, which is legally necessary for the deal to be ratified.

But if the House does not approve the Withdrawal Agreement this week, our departure will instead be extended only to 11pm on 12th April.

At this point we would either leave with No Deal, or we would “indicate a way forward before this date for consideration by the European Council”.

If this involved a further extension, it would certainly mean participation in the European Parliamentary elections.

The Council’s Conclusions were subsequently turned into a legal Decision, with which the UK agreed, and which came into force last Friday.

So while the Government has today laid a Statutory Instrument, which will be debated later this week, to reflect this in our own domestic legislation, the date for our departure from the EU has now changed in international law.

Were the House not to pass the Statutory Instrument, it would cause legal confusion and damaging uncertainty, but it would not have any effect on the date of our exit.

Mr Speaker, I continue to believe that the right path forward is for the United Kingdom to leave the EU as soon as possible with a deal, now on 22nd

May.

But it is with great regret that I have had to conclude that as things stand, there is still not sufficient support in the House to bring back the deal for a third Meaningful Vote.

I continue to have discussions with colleagues across the House to build support, so that we can bring the vote forward this week, and guarantee Brexit.

If we cannot, the Government made a commitment that we would work across the House to find a majority on a way forward.

The amendment in the name of my Right Honourable Friend the Member for West Dorset seeks to provide for this process by taking control of the Order Paper. I continue to believe doing so would be an unwelcome precedent to set, which would overturn the balance of our democratic institutions.

So the Government will oppose this amendment this evening, but in order to fulfil our commitments to this House would seek to provide government time in order for this process to proceed.

It would be for this House to put forward options for consideration, and to determine the procedure by which they wished to do so.

I must confess that I am sceptical about such a process of indicative votes.

When we have tried this kind of thing in the past, it has produced contradictory outcomes or no outcome at all. There is a further risk when it comes to Brexit, as the UK is only one half of the equation and the votes could lead to an outcome that is unnegotiable with the EU.

No Government could give a blank cheque to commit to an outcome without knowing what it is.

So I cannot commit the Government to delivering the outcome of any votes held by this house. But I do commit to engaging constructively with this process.

There are many different views on the way forward, but I want to explain the options as I understand them.

The default outcome continues to be to leave with No Deal.

But this house has previously expressed its opposition to that path, and may very well do so again this week.

The alternative is to pursue a different form of Brexit or a Second Referendum.

But the bottom line remains, if the House does not approve the Withdrawal Agreement this week, and is not prepared to countenance leaving without a deal we will have to seek a longer extension. This would entail the UK having to hold European Elections. And it would mean that we will not have been able

to guarantee Brexit.

These are now choices the House will have the opportunity to express its view on.

Mr Speaker, this is the first chance I have had to address the House since my remarks last Wednesday evening.

I expressed my frustration with our collective failure to take a decision, but I know that many Members across this House are frustrated too.

We all have difficult jobs to do.

People on all sides of the debate hold passionate views and I respect those differences.

I would also like to thank all of those colleagues that have supported the deal so far, and those that have taken the time to meet with me to discuss their concerns.

I hope we can all agree, we are now at the moment of decision.

And in doing so we must confront the reality of the hard choices before us.

Unless this House agrees to it, No Deal will not happen.

No Brexit must not happen.

And a slow Brexit which extends Article 50 beyond 22nd May, forces the British people to take part in European Elections and gives up control of any of our borders, laws, money or trade is not a Brexit that will bring the British people together.

I know that the Deal I have put forward is a compromise. It seeks to deliver on the referendum and retain trust in our democracy, while also respecting the concerns of those who voted to remain.

But if this House can back it, we could be out of the European Union in less than two months.

There would no further extensions, no threat to Brexit and no risk of a No Deal.

That I believe is the way to deliver the Brexit the British people voted for.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

Press release: 'No deal' EU exit: Government issues reminder to waste industry

The government is reminding companies which export waste from the UK to [review their contingency plans in case of disruption at ports, should the UK leave the European Union without a deal](#).

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the government's top priority. This has not changed. However, a responsible government must plan for every eventuality, including a no deal scenario.

With or without a deal, all existing consents which authorise the export of hazardous waste, known as 'notified waste', to any EU country will remain valid when we leave the EU. Companies that export waste from the UK will see no change in the processes that govern the export of 'non-notified waste' ('green-list' wastes) to the EU.

However, in the event of no deal, changes to border controls may impact on some waste exports.

Disruptions at container ports are not expected, but there may be some delays at ports which operate 'roll-on, roll-off' systems. The Port of Dover is predicted to be the most affected and steps are being taken to minimise the impact. Waste exports using the Eurotunnel may also experience disruptions.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Our landmark Resources and Waste Strategy makes clear that we are committed to dealing with more of our waste in the UK and increasing recycling. But in the short term, we have taken important action to ensure any disruption caused by a no-deal Brexit can be minimised.

This government has been absolutely clear on our commitment to deliver a Brexit deal negotiated with the EU. But the government is preparing for any eventuality and we need our businesses to do the same.

What you should do if you export waste

If you or your business collects, transports or stores waste that is due to be exported to the EU, your existing permit or licence still applies and you are expected to continue to meet its conditions.

Given anticipated disruption at some ports, you should make a plan to minimise any impacts on your business:

- review your own capacity and how long you can store waste on your site
- identify alternative storage facilities that could accept your waste
- assess if there are other export routes to market that avoid impacted ports
- identify any alternative recovery or disposal routes for your waste
- contact your haulage operator to discuss any potential changes to transport plans

If you do change your export route, you will also need to change your export notification. This must be agreed by the UK and overseas competent authority. In England, you can contact the [Environment Agency](#) for advice, or contact the equivalent competent authority if you are in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

If you have to keep additional waste on your site for longer than expected, you will need to consider any resulting environmental risks and take steps to keep these properly controlled.

Your contingency plans need to be compatible with the requirements on your permit. In England, if you are unable to make adequate contingency plans you should contact the Environment Agency for advice.

- Anyone who suspects criminality in the waste industry in England should contact the [Environment Agency](#) on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.
- People in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should contact their equivalent competent authority for advice:
 1. [Scotland: Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#)
 2. [Wales: Natural Resources Wales](#)
 3. [Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Environment Agency \(NIEA\)](#)
- ‘Notified wastes’ are hazardous wastes, mixed municipal wastes and the residues from incineration of mixed municipal waste sent for recovery and any wastes sent for disposal. ‘Non-notified’ or ‘green-list’ wastes are non-hazardous wastes destined for recovery.

Speech: Local knowledge. National action. International leadership.

Local knowledge. National action. International leadership

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency Manchester Green Summit, 25

March 2019

–

They say all news is local.

Environmental impacts are local too.

Just over a week ago the Manchester Evening News reported the fire service was called out to 48 floods in Greater Manchester when nearly a month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours.

Last year, the military was called in to help the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service manage the vast moorland fires during the heatwave.

–

The causes of environmental problems are local too – but also national, and international.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the world has 12 years to reduce carbon emissions and limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

And, they said – even if we do – we still face a future of hotter days, fiercer fires, and bigger storms.

These will create specific impacts to cities everywhere.

This morning, I was pleased to see the interview on The Huffington Post with 15 year old Emma Greenwood – demonstrating support in Manchester for climate action inspired by Greta Thunberg and the schools strike.

In the interview Emma said: “I think many adults think: ‘it’s not affecting me currently’ or know that it won’t affect them in their lifetime so think it doesn’t matter. But they need to consider the bigger picture and the long term consequences.”

I agree.

But, I hope the Manchester Green Summit shows that there are many adults working to address these problems.

I’m grateful to Andy Burnham and the GMCA for giving that work a much needed platform today.

–

When I spoke at the Green Summit last year, I said cities are at the forefront of the world’s environmental problems.

However, Manchester’s historic capacity for reinvention gives the city region an advantage in meeting the challenges of the future.

–

The solutions to environmental problems are also local, national, and international.

The Environment Agency – led locally in Greater Manchester by our area director Lee Rawlinson – works to create a better place for people and wildlife, and to support sustainable development in England.

The combination of local knowledge and national resource is a great strength.

We also need to share expertise and learn with other countries in order to protect local communities and challenge damaging behaviour that can cross international borders – like waste crime or excessive carbon emissions.

–

This spring, the government has committed to publish the UK's first ever Green Finance Strategy, setting out the steps they are taking to attract investment into a clean, and resilient, economy, and cementing the UK's position as a global leader in green finance.

But, global leadership can only happen if we're actually walking the walk at home.

Which is why we're supporting the GMCA and 11 other partners to develop the IGNITION project in Manchester.

–

The government has been looking at the barriers to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan, and highlighted market failures in investments and funding as a key challenge.

IGNITION would be a 3 year first-of-its-kind project that would see the GMCA – supported by 11 partners including the Environment Agency – create, and finance, projects that are:

- attractive to private investors

And,

- create confidence for investments in blue and green infrastructure.

It would set a target of a 10% increase in green infrastructure in Greater Manchester by 2038 – and could provide a model for investors that would help “green finance” for urban infrastructure go mainstream around the world.

I'm not surprised to see Manchester leading again.

–

As the Government's Urban Pioneer, exploring new ways to improve the natural environment, and as one of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities,

Greater Manchester can be a lodestar for cities everywhere.

–

The Environment Agency is right there with you.

–

We are helping Manchester City Council and U&I at Mayfield – the £1 billion redevelopment of the old Royal Mail Depot near Piccadilly.

We have supported investments that are de-culverting and re-naturalising the river, reducing flood risk and creating a new 6 acre city park – the largest of its kind since the Victorian era.

–

Reducing flood risk is always a priority for the EA and we have worked with Rochdale Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, to find funding for the flood scheme in Rochdale and Littleborough.

This could be the largest ever built in Greater Manchester.

It would reduce risk to around 1000 homes, 200 businesses, a transport interchange, the metrolink, business parks, and a primary school.

We hope the project will start on site in 2020 and be complete by 2024.

–

In the last 18 months, we have completed flood schemes in Westleigh and Salford and have schemes in development in Alder Forest and Prestolee.

As well as reducing the risk of flooding, these will create habitat for wildlife.

–

We are helping Salford and Manchester with the environmental aspects of the bid for the Northern Gateway so that the £1 billion investment will create a river park leading into the city along the River Irk.

–

And, we are working with Natural England to develop a Greater Manchester City Region policy for net gain with planning and development.

–

Alongside our work here I am also pleased to see people from the Environment Agency being recognised in Manchester.

Last week, Sarah Davies, and Claire Eadington were celebrated at the Northern

Power Women Awards, which champions excellence in diversity action in, from, and for the North.

–

Earlier, I was delighted to see the video from Chris Packham saying “the Environment Agency are one of the great unsung forces in the UK.”

He went on to say: “What we don’t hear enough about – I’m afraid – is the enormously good work that they’ve done over the years.”

And then he said: “anyway I have digressed...”

–

Well, as Chair of the Environment Agency, I can’t agree with that at all.

It’s not a digression... it’s an absolutely crucial point.

It is fantastic to see so many inspiring projects on display today, and to hear more stories of resilience and reinvention.

I am pleased to say that since the moorland fires last year, fire breaks have been reinstated and funding made available for us to work with the Woodland Trust to help restore the internationally significant peatland.

Extensive re-seeding and planting will help to prevent soil erosion, reduce flood risk, improve habitats, and safeguard water for the future.

Thank you for inviting me back to the Green Summit.

It’s so inspiring to be in a city that is not only determined to rise to the challenges of the future...

...but show the rest of the world how to get on and deal with them now.

–