



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear all,

Following the announcement that the Government has agreed an extension to Article 50 with the EU until 31 October 2019 at the latest, I wanted to write to you at the earliest opportunity to share my reflections on what this means for the department and industry.

The EU has agreed that should the Withdrawal Agreement be ratified before 31 October the extension can be ended earlier. In the event of being unable to secure and ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, the extension is dependent on the UK holding European elections before 22 May.

As the legal instruments required to hold European elections have now been passed, the 31 October is the only date on which a no deal exit could happen under the terms of this extension. The immediate risk of leaving the EU with 'no deal' has been avoided and the Government remains focused on ensuring our smooth and orderly withdrawal from the EU with a deal as soon as possible.

Although Parliament has rejected leaving without a deal multiple times, it is important to note this remains the legal default at the end of the extension period. While Defra has now stood down its emergency no deal planning and operations for the immediate term, no deal on 31 October remains a possibility and so work continues to mitigate the impacts if this occurs.

We will continue to update our advice on GOV.UK on how businesses should prepare for Exit as negotiations continue. During the course of the extension, the UK will continue to hold full membership rights as well as its obligations.

I also wanted to use this letter as an opportunity to acknowledge the work that you have done to support businesses and to thank you for your continued collaboration with Defra's work on EU Exit to date. I recognise the costs that have already gone into business preparation and the ongoing costs associated with the continued uncertainty. I would like to assure you the government is doing all it can to secure a negotiated withdrawal as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your continued collaboration and I look forward to continuing this co-operation and collaboration in the weeks and months ahead.

With every good wish,

Michael Gove