

EG/EEG Cover Sheet



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Paper



Brexit: Business Continuity Implications for the University

Summary

The UK is due to leave the European Union on 29th March 2019. Although the government remains publically confident that there will be a 'deal', including a transition period where current EU arrangements will continue whilst new procedures are implemented, a "no deal" outcome cannot be ruled out. Should there be no transition period, widespread disruption is probable. This is especially significant for Kent, due to our being the gateway into Europe. This paper suggests that there needs to be contingency planning involving key PSDs and, in the event that a 'no deal' Brexit remains a possibility in the New Year, accelerated planning, with an associated communications plan, to mitigate risks to our supplies, our transport, our staff, our students and business.

Discussion and Argument

The government position is that the Chequers plan is the basis for a withdrawal deal with the EU prior to our formal exit from the EU on 29 March. At that point, there would be an implementation period from March 2019 to December 2020, where current borders and customs arrangements would continue with free movement and circulation of goods. There are uncertainties around both negotiations with the EU and parliamentary ratification, nonetheless, most commentators still believe a deal of some kind remains much the most likely outcome. While it cannot be excluded that there may be some disruption even in that case, it is prudent to consider now the contingency plans that the university will need to take to mitigate the impact of a no deal Brexit. This paper represents an initial scoping exercise on the business continuity implications for university operations, covering issues such as logistics, transport, staff and student movement based on Government and local council advice.

The possible scale of disruption

A no deal Brexit would create considerable short term problems for the country as a whole. The Department for Exiting the EU has issued 37 technical notices covering the implications for a range of different sectors. The only notice explicitly targeted at higher education is that covering working or studying in the UK or EU. The implications for us in this area are considered in a companion paper.

This University will be particularly affected by the likely traffic disruption. The risk is that parts of the road network in Kent, in particular the M2 and M20, will be gridlocked if a no-

deal Brexit means a longer time for customs clearance or other checks, such as trading standards. Kent is the transit county for (2017 figures):

- 4.2m freight vehicles through the Channel Ports
- 9m vehicles through the Port of Dover/Channel Tunnel
- 32.1m passengers through the Port of Dover/Eurotunnel

The government has created a Kent Border Planning Group to bring together national, regional and local partners (including KCC) to prepare future arrangements. The main plan involves a £25m scheme for a contraflow on the M20, codenamed Operation Brock, with one side of the motorway being used to hold lorries, and the former Manston airport site on standby once the M20 is full. The M26 is also likely to be used as a holding area. It is far from clear whether even this contingency will be sufficient. KCC assess that there will be additional pressure on the M2 and the A roads throughout the county (particularly the A2 that joins our two campuses).

Issues for the University

The primary concerns for the university in this scenario would be around travel and supplies, though other points in the technical notices could also be relevant. Preliminary analysis suggests the following main issues will need to be considered:

- **Travel between Canterbury and Medway campus** – the M2/A2 will likely be overwhelmed if the M20 is closed because of Operation Stack/Brock. This will likely affect the Campus Shuttle, deliveries between campuses and general transport of students and staff. Students/Staff that travel from outside of Canterbury are likely to experience disruption.
 - What do we need to communicate? When and to whom?
 - Preparations for Campus Shuttle/deliveries between campuses
- **Travel disruption could affect deliveries onto either campus**, and there is also the issue of imported goods coming through the ports. No-deal Brexit could potentially cause days/weeks of disruption at the ports, so any supplies coming from overseas will likely be delayed.
 - Look at when deliveries are usually made, and where possible consider ensuring orders are complete and delivered before 29th March – this may be especially necessary when ordering scientific/chemical/nuclear goods which would likely be held longer at the ports if there is no clarity on legislation.
 - Ensure vending machines/food stores/freezers etc are filled before 29th March.
 - Consider food stockpiles.
 - Disruptions could cause delays in prescription medications being distributed – this could cause stress for students and staff. Communications for reassurance? Advise those on medications to have extra as backup?
 - Rearrange refuse collections that would normally occur on 29th March (or in the days after) to be complete before 29th March so that disruption does not cause a backlog of waste. Consider storage implications for waste should road access be severely affected.

- Construction/Refurbishment work being carried out around 29th March (currently minimal work is planned to be carried out at this time). Included for awareness of issue going forwards.
- **Travelling outside of the UK** – it is possible that ports, Eurostar/tunnel and airports will be severely affected in the case of a “no deal” Brexit. Ideally, travel should be discouraged from 29th March into early April as individuals may become stranded.
Note Spring Term ends on 5th April.
 - What needs to be communicated, when and to whom?
 - Travel may have already been booked by now – what should be advised?
 - Travel between European centres may be disrupted. End of term, split centre students will be returning to the UK.
 - 2nd April – 20 Years in Europe event in Rome
 - Arrangements for staff/students stranded at Heathrow/Gatwick/etc – should we have buses available to collect those who have been stranded – can we communicate this in advance (e.g. if travellers are due to go somewhere, they have contact details to be able to call and arrange groups to be picked up).
 - University organised trips (e.g. field trips often occur in spring term) – need to establish what is planned and what needs to be communicated.
- **The ports being overwhelmed, and the potential transport disruption could have an impact on security and policing.** Where resources are diverted, it can leave vulnerabilities where normally there would be coverage. This could also be the case for ambulances/medical support if roads are blocked.
 - Should we consider additional security?
 - A possible need for in house traffic control should lorries try to use campus roads as a short cut?
- **Events, conferences, visitors in spring term/around 29th March** – no open days planned – what guidance may be beneficial?
- **Copyright/GDPR implications** – anything needing to be considered in the short term? If no deal is reached, what will be the risks surrounding GDPR if we were to have a breach the next day? Would we be fined?
 - Risk of cyber-attacks around Brexit date may be higher as the disruption/confusion could be taken advantage of.
- **Student & staff welfare** – general considerations around welfare of students (and staff) during times of uncertainty and transition. Evidence nationally that around referendum date there was a spike in hate crimes and harassment, so it's possible a repeat could occur around Brexit date – could we issue extra positive messaging in attempt to counter?
 - What should be communicated, when and to whom?
 - Extra resource around 29th March and weeks after for students who require welfare support?
 - Security considerations in case of heightened harassment of non UK nationals [Note: Kent has active Far Right groups who may exploit the period around Brexit]
 - International/EU students access to Medical Centre
 - Risks of discrimination/Visa checks for private accommodation – if landlords cancel accommodation for EU/International students, we could have homeless students arriving in September with nowhere to go.

It should be noted that even in the event of a deal being made, there may be some disruption if that deal is not well communicated/implemented: county contingency planning assumes Operation Stack/Brock may still be put in place for some time, (past experience suggests that a single day of Operation Stack was sufficient to cause disruption across the County).

Recommendations

EG is recommended to take note of the possible scale of disruption to university business in the event of a no deal Brexit. It would be wrong to set hares running by surfacing the detail publicly at this stage, but the VC might refer briefly to contingency planning in her communications to the November Council and in the proposed Europe blog (5th December). Over the coming weeks there will be further work to scope risks and mitigations.

The nature of the UK/EU withdrawal agreement should be known at a special summit later in November or, at the latest, after the European Council (13/14th December). The parliamentary timetable thereafter is highly uncertain, but in the event of “no deal” EG is recommended to establish a Brexit working group to convene early in the New Year. The group would be tasked with (inter alia):

- Further scoping of risks (with PSDs most concerned)
- Providing guidance to enable relevant PSDs (and possibly some schools) to draw up detailed contingency plans
- Scoping issues around continuity of operation of European Centres
- Drawing up a communications policy, identifying what should be communicated to whom and by when.
- Liaison with Kent County Council and Kent Resilience Forum
- Consider longer term impacts over summer period and start of new term.