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| Agenda Item |  |
| Report No |  |

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

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| **Committee:** | | **Brexit Working Group** |
| **Date:** | | **28 October 2020** |
| **Report Title:** | | **Brexit and European Update** |
| **Report By:** | | **Angus MacLeod, Brexit & European Policy Coordinator** |
| **1.** | **Purpose/Executive Summary** | |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this report is to give Members a summary of Brexit and European issues relevant to Highland Council since the last meeting of the Brexit Working Group on **17 August 2020**.The information contained below was accurate at the time of writing and may be subject to change at short notice. Verbal updates can be given in this regard. | |
| **2.** | **Recommendations** | |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to:   1. Note the paper 2. Agree the course of action highlighted in sections 12 – Summary of ongoing Preparations. | |
| **3.** | **Implications** | |
| 3.1  3.2 | In general terms it is not possible to know what the full implications of Brexit will be until a deal or no deal is confirmed. A deal could range across a myriad of options whereas a no deal will see the UK’s future trading arrangements with the EU under WTO rules.  However, it is reasonable to make a number of assumptions based on what is known so far.  **Resource**. There will be an increased burden placed upon the Environmental and Trading Standards elements of the Council in relation to import and export regulations. It is also likely that there will be a wider impact on some Third Sector funding as the UK will not participate in EU Programmes 2021 – 2027. Once a definitive direction of travel is known (deal/no deal) the implications will become clearer and once the detail of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is known then future funding arrangements can begin to be quantified. | |
| 3.3 | **Legal**. There will be change across the board in our legal standing with the EU, but clarity is still required. | |
| 3.4 | **Community**. (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island). There could be wider community implications in terms of a potential population decrease brought about by the end of freedom of movement and the introduction of new immigration rules. This in turn could have an impact on our workforce and the provision of services. The potential for customs delays, tariffs and supply chain disruption could lead to a rise in inflation and the subsequent knock on effects in the costs of living and foodstuffs. | |
| 3.5 | **Climate Change / Carbon Clever**. The EU is signed up to a Green Deal which has wider environmental considerations. It is not known whether or not the UK will look to mirror this. | |
| 3.6 | **Risk**. Brexit is recorded as CR4 in the corporate risk register and this identifies a number of areas where there will be impacts on the Council, its partners and its communities. Risk is especially high to business continuity for the Council if a no deal exit occurs, causing disruption to supply, increased demands for service, price increases and potential loss of income and with insufficient time to plan mitigation especially where Government guidance is not provided or provided very late. Brexit will result in the loss of EU funding which, if not replaced by the Government, may pose a risk to the economic and social programmes of the Council and its partners. Interest rates and exchange rates may be affected by the withdrawal process impacting on the affordability of the Council’s capital programme. Restrictions on the free movement of people could lead to skills gaps in the Council, our partner organisations and local businesses. This will be updated. | |
| 3.7 | **Gaelic**. Gaelic teachers and Gaelic medium teachers have been included in the Scotland only Shortage Occupation List of the UK points-based immigration system | |
| **4.**  4.1  4.2  4.3  4.4  4.5  4.6  4.7  4.8  4.9  4.10  **5**  5.1  5.2  5.3  5.4  **6**  6.1  6.2  6.3  6.4  6.5 | **Background and Context**  The UK left the EU and entered a transition period on **31 January 2020** under the terms of the [Withdrawal Agreement Bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-withdrawal-agreement-bill). This period is designed to allow time for discussions to take place around the terms of any future trade arrangements with the EU. There are not expected to be any significant changes during the transition period which is scheduled to end at 23:00hrs on **31December 2020**.  The UK/EU negotiations, which started in **March 2020,** are still ongoing, albeit not face to face. The sticking points remain around fishing, a level playing field and the governance of any future agreement. Compromises will be needed if a deal is to be reached.  The Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s latest deadline for an agreement was the **15 October 2020** when the European Council met. When this deadline passed the Prime Minister indicated that the UK would move towards a no-deal outcome although the EU indicated that negotiations should continue. Significantly the Prime minister did not close the door on talks. The EU has previously been working towards a deadline at the end of October/beginning of November. It should also be noted that previous EU negotiations have gone right to the wire and sometimes beyond so it is not impossible that a deal of sorts will still be agreed. Parliaments on both sides still need to ratify any deal.  As it stands the EU’s formal ratification procedures require an EU Commission proposal for a Council decision on the deal by early November. The agreement would be sent to the European Parliament in mid-November. The EU Parliament would need to give consent to the agreement, with a vote expected in December.  During the latter part of **2019** and prior to the Withdrawal Agreement Bill being agreed, preparations for a no deal Brexit were put in place with [Operation Yellowhammer](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831199/20190802_Latest_Yellowhammer_Planning_assumptions_CDL.pdf). It is not thought that Operation Yellowhammer will be revived although this does not negate a new operational name. So far it looks as if the UK Government have gone down the advertising route that highlights the Check, Change, Go [website](https://www.gov.uk/transition).  On **18 October 2020** the UK Government launched a [Time is Running Out](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/time-is-running-out-for-businesses-to-prepare?utm_source=d9f9301b-c83c-44f0-8df1-f301b2a04526&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily) campaign aimed at businesses, urging them to step up preparations for Australia-style arrangements from 1 January 2021. Australia arrangements mean a no deal hard Brexit.  The UK Government Cabinet Office have produced a Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario (RWCS) plan but this information is marked official sensitive. It is not expected that the Scottish Government will produce their own RWCS  Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who has responsibility for advising the Prime Minister on policy development and implementation, particularly around Brexit provided some information on the RWCS to the House of Commons on **23 Sept 2020**. The analysis suggests the flow of freight between Dover and Calais -- a vital U.K. trade artery -- could be reduced by up to 80% compared to normal levels. As many as 70% of trucks traveling to the EU may not be ready for new border controls, which could translate to a 7,000 truck-long queues in Kent. Only 76% of businesses believe they are fully ready for the new import/export regime.  Resilience Partnerships are now looking at preparedness, self-assessments, gap testing & exercising. On **7 December 2020** the National Co-ordination Centre (NCC) will stand-up to begin familiarisation and the Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR) will activate. Concurrency is being identified as a significant risk and a Scotland wide sub-group is being set up to look at concurrency issues and to provide Resilience partners with a concurrency toolkit.  If there is no agreement, then the UK will trade under WTO rules, with its associated tariffs, from **1 January 2021.**  **Devolved Powers and the UK Internal Market Bill**  Withdrawal from the EU requires that a number of regulatory and oversight powers currently exercised by the EU are replicated domestically. While as previously agreed between the UK and the Devolved Administration, most of these issues will be devolved by default and there will be a range of common frameworks that require UK-wide arrangements.  On **18 June 2020**, the Scottish Government tabled the [UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill](https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115449.aspx) which will give Scottish Ministers power to keep devolved laws similar to EU laws, ensures Scottish Ministers and public bodies pay attention to environmental principles when they make policies, and proposes the setting up a new organisation (Environmental Standards Scotland) to replace the oversight of environmental law currently provided by the EU Commission.  It is worth noting that the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill acts as a counterpart to the [UK Environment Bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020) (expected **late 2020**) as it introduces the EU guiding principles on the environment into Scots law which the UK chose not to retain when approving the [EU Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020](https://ec.europa.eu/info/european-union-and-united-kingdom-forging-new-partnership/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement_en)  On **9 September 2020** the UK Government published the [UK Internal Market Bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bill-introduced-to-protect-jobs-and-trade-across-the-whole-of-the-united-kingdom?utm_source=88e519a5-1b8f-4058-8cd7-71a612dda11e&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) and this has been described variously as a power surge or a power grab. Notwithstanding the controversy over the admission that this bill will break international law, the core function of the bill is also contentious around the Devolution settlement. Where previously rules and regulations around food, air quality and animal welfare for example, were set in Brussels, there is now a row over who should have the final say within the UK. The Bill proposes that devolved administrations will have to accept goods and services from all other parts of the UK - even if they have set different standards locally. Concerns have been expressed by the Scottish & Welsh Governments and this could undermine the discussions on common frameworks. This is likely to impact on the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Bill highlighted at 5.2.  **Future Trading Arrangements**  The UK Government published a paper on **13 July** **2020** entitled [The Border with the European Union](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-updated-gb-eu-border-operating-model?utm_source=8dd52b96-f23f-431f-8a16-17ea098b1cea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) and updated it further on **8 October 2020** As previously intimated this paper outlines the three import stages in **January**, **April** and **July 2021**.The EU said it would implement full checks on UK exports at the **start of 2021**. This is not the finalised trade deal and it is expected there will be some form of tariffs and additional regulatory requirements.  The main changes to the **8 October** **2020** update is the mandatory requirement for a Kent Access Permit for HGVs using Kent’s channel crossings, a list of intended locations of inland border infrastructure (none in Scotland) to provide the necessary additional capacity to carry out checks on freight and the announcement that passports will be required for entry into the UK from October 2021 as the Government phases out the use of EU, EEA and Swiss national identity cards as a valid travel document for entry to the UK.  On **1 September 2020** the UK Government gave an update around the use of the [“CE” mark](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/placing-manufactured-goods-on-the-market-in-great-britain-from-1-january-2021) which is a requirement on many products that are traded on the single market in the European Economic Area (EEA) to show that these products meet EU safety, health and environmental requirements which comply with EU legislation and crucially allow free movement within the European market. It is planned to introduce a new UKCA (UK Conformity Assessed) marking that will be used for goods being placed on the market in Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland). It covers most goods which previously required the CE marking. Whilst the UKCA marking can be used from **1 January 2021**, businesses will still be able to use the CE marking until **1 January 2022** in most cases, to allow businesses time to adjust to the new requirements. You will still need a CE marking for sale in the EU from **1 January 2021**.  On **7 September 2020** the UK Government published details around a new communications [campaign](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-goes-direct-to-eu-businesses-with-new-campaign?utm_source=726ebf5c-8958-482b-98d9-7ca2cdfd2ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) to provide EU-based businesses with information they need to get ready to trade with the UK after 31 December 2020  On **10 September 2020** the UK Government published [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/export-fish-to-the-eu-from-1-january-2021) on the export of fish and shellfish to the EU from **1 January 2021**. This means that the same rules that are currently in place for exports of fish to some non-EU countries will need to be followed with new requirements for an [export health certificate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-an-export-health-certificate) (except for direct landings of fresh fish in EU ports from UK-flagged fishing vessels), a [catch certificate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/create-a-uk-catch-certificate) and, there may also be a requirement for direct landing documents, a storage document and a processing statement. | |
| 6.6  6.7  6.8  6.9  6.10  6.11  6.12  6.13  6.14  6.15  6.16  **7**  7.1 | If you land fish directly into EU ports, you’ll also need to complete a [prior notification form](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/give-prior-notification-to-land-fish-in-the-eu), [a pre-landing declaration](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/make-a-pre-landing-declaration-to-land-fish-in-an-eu-port) and the [NEAFC Port-State Control forms](https://psc.neafc.org/welcome)  Some fish and shellfish are excluded from the requirement of a UK catch certificate for export but in order to create a catch certificate, you’ll need to register on the Fish Export Service when it becomes available in **late 2020**. You’ll need a separate catch certificate for each export  At the behest of the Scottish Government, the UK Government are looking at a prioritisation mechanism around exports of fresh and live produce. Detail still awaited.  During week commencing **14 October 2020** Food Standards Scotland wrote to all the fishing vessel owners in Scotland around their obligations to contact their Local Authority as soon as possible if their catch is exported, either directly or indirectly, to any EU Member State at the end of the Transition Period so that they can be registered and their vessels inspected. Failure to do so will result in their catch being unable to be exported to EU member states at the end of the transition period. There are potentially 400 vessels that have a home port within the Highland Council area.  On **14 September 2020** the HMRC [wrote](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-to-businesses-about-new-trade-arrangements-with-the-eu-from-1-january-2021?utm_source=59324bea-5bc7-439a-b71a-3325d4a096d6&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) to all VAT-registered businesses in Great Britain trading with the EU, or the EU and the rest of the world to explain what they need to do to prepare for new processes for moving goods between Great Britain and the EU from **1 January 2021**. This exercise was [repeated](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-to-businesses-about-new-trade-arrangements-with-the-eu-from-1-january-2021?utm_source=7f6af1a1-080b-442d-9cfc-0514138f5f9b&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily) on **19 October 2020**.  On **22 September 2020** the Animal & Plant Health Agency and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs in the UK Government gave updated [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-border-control-posts-animal-and-animal-product-imports/live-animals-animal-products-and-food-and-feed-of-non-animal-origin-border-control-posts-bcp-in-the-uk) on live animals, animal products and food and feed of non-animal origin as it relates to Border Control Posts (BCP). Invergordon is listed as a BCP for these types of goods. It may be that other Highland ports may have to come into consideration.  On **1 October 2020** the Animal & Plant Health Agency and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs in the UK Government launched a £300,000 [fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/training-fund-launched-to-help-vets-prepare-for-1-january-2021?utm_source=8aa20473-0bc6-4925-bd70-277d49cc7fd5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) for vets and local authority officials to access free training to support the UK preparedness for the end of the transition period. This is aimed specifically at Export Health Certificates to confirm exports of live animals or animal products to the EU meets health requirements.  A Scottish Government Borders Stakeholder Group has been established to discuss the policy, delivery and designations of Border Control Posts in Scotland and to provide support. The remit of this group is to assist all potential points of entry in Scotland to have the information which they need in order to prepare for the end of the transition period and to provide a place for issues relating to border delivery to be raised with the Scottish Government.  On **2 October 2020** the UK Government launched a £200 million [fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-port-infrastructure-fund-opens-for-bids?utm_source=d9469410-4e54-4f3e-84be-633aea5cbb90&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) for ports to build new facilities. The fund is targeted at those ports that have the space to build new border infrastructure on their current sites so that they are ready to handle new customs requirements under the new Border Operating Model. The funding can be used for a range of vital port infrastructure - from warehouses and control posts to traffic management systems.  Business Gateway Highland and HIE provide links on their website to [Prepare for Brexit](https://www.prepareforbrexit.scot/)  which gives the most up to date information. Business Gateway Highland have also referenced Brexit preparations in a [recent article](https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/sponsored-content-business-gateway-highland-offers-support-to-local-businesses-212317/) for the local press and the Business Gateway team were given a presentation on **23 September 2020** on the current information on import/export and immigration by Angus MacLeod, Brexit & European Policy Coordinator.  The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) recognise that there are areas of concern, with businesses, around more preparations for Brexit. Previous Brexit deadlines have come and gone and there is a reluctance with businesses to take pre-emptive action in the run up to 31 December 2020 for fear that their investments will be wasted, especially when reserves are close to exhaustion. Having prepared twice for a no deal, companies simply do not the capacity to prepare again.  **Immigration and Travel**  On **13 July 2020** the Home Secretary Priti Patel presented the UK’s future [immigration system](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-signals-britain-is-open-for-business) and this was covered in detail in the report to the Brexit Working Group on **17 August 2020**. In summary freedom of movement will cease and a new points-based immigration system will come into effect on **1 January 2021**. It is not seen as helpful to Highland as we rely on inward migration for our population increase and the proposals could also be problematic for our communities, services and business sectors. | |
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| **8.** | **EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)** | |
| 8.1  8.2  8.3  8.4  8.5  8.6  8.7  8.8  8.9  **9**  9.1  9.2  9.3  9.4 | As a consequence of the UK leaving the EU there is a requirement for EU Citizens (including EEA and Swiss citizens) and their family members (including children) to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to stay in the UK post Brexit. EU Citizens have until **30 June 2021** to apply or **31 December 2020** in the event of a no deal. The period 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021 is known as the grace period and aims to pick up those EU Citizens who are resident in the UK prior to 31 December 2020  This has been advertised nationally but Highland Council continue to be pro-active in communicating the process across the region. This has involved engagement with elected members and Ward Managers, literature drops, direct communications with key organisations, press releases, tweets, Facebook posts, Council website updates, advertised information sessions, seminars and presentations (physical and online) in English, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Greek, Spanish, British Sign Language and International Sign.  Most recently Highland Council shared information on a two-part webinar on Vulnerable Citizens and the EU Settlement Scheme with an expert in immigration law scheduled for 13 and 20 October. The webinar’s focus was on those who support vulnerable citizens, looked after children, the elderly, homeless people, people struggling with their mental health, people with disabilities, Roma/Travellers/Gypsy communities and people with language or IT barriers  In addition to this the Home Office’s EU Settlement Scheme Vulnerability Programme also organised a series of teleconferences aimed at social workers and others within local authorities who are helping looked after children and young people make applications to the Scheme.    The teleconferences will take place at 12:00hrs on the following dates:   * 27 October 2020 * 26 November 2020 * 22 December 2020 * 27 January 2021   The most up to date figures for Highland show that the number of EU Citizens applying for EU settled status in Highland is 7,940 out of an estimated 12,000 EU Citizens in the Highland area. This gives a 66% application rate.  The numbers have shown a steady increase since **June 2019** as follows;   * **June 2019** 1,790 * **September 2019** 3,880 * **December 2019** 5,740 * **March** **2020** 7,270 * **June 2020** 7,940   It is worth noting that up until **December 2019** it was estimated that the number of EU Nationals in Highland was 9,000. If we were to operate on the 9,000 figure our % rate would be 88%. The reality is that we do not know how many EU Nationals reside in Highland  By far and away the largest grouping has been from Poland with 3,620 applications, followed by Latvia with 770 and Romania with 500.  The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is very active with the EUSS and is helping a lot of EU nationals across the work spectrum including cleaners, footballers, council employees, Executives, General Practitioners and clinical staff. They have also held specialist sessions with the large employers in Highland and even helped EU Nationals get jobs in the process This advice is available in any of the main 8 CAB offices as well as any of the many outreach points.    The Citizens Rights Project are providing free support to Highland Council to assist in the EUSS application process of Looked After Children.  **EU Funding Programmes**  During the period **2014 – 2020** the Highlands and Islands, as a Transition Area, participated in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) programmes. Current programme values, as of **August 2020**, are €105,380,764.00 for ERDF (83% commitment) and €64,749,601.00 for ESF (99% commitment)  There is a current proposal by the Managing Authority for a COVID-19 Response Fund which is been developed to take advantage of flexibilities to the current regulations under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII and CRII +) announced by the European Commission. The funds will be used to support COVID-19 related activities and, in particular the purchasing of goods and services to support the health care system as well as support to SME’s to help them mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The overall amount indicated is £19,000,000 for all of Scotland. Further detail is awaited.    The European [Green Deal](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/european-green-deal-call) is Europe’s new growth strategy and Horizon 2020, which is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme, put out a call in **September 2020** to mobilise research and innovation projects to show how they can provide concrete solutions for the Green Deal main priorities. Opportunities to participate in matchmaking events with a view to look for international partners were held during a number of [Research & Innovation days.](https://research-innovation-days.ec.europa.eu/) As this opportunity is still within the current funding programmes partners in the UK can still participate.    In addition to the Research & Innovation days the Enterprise Europe Network in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Invest NI and Northern Ireland National Contract Points (NCPs) held an [international partnering event](https://h2020-green-deal-call-dublin.b2match.io/) on the Green Deal Call on **13 October 2020.** Innovate UK and the Knowledge Transfer Network also held an information day and brokerage event on **29 September 2020** specifically for the Green Ports and Airports call | |
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| **10.** | **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** | |
| 10.1  10.2  10.3  10.4  10.5  **11**  11.1  11.2  11.3  **12**  12.1  12.2  12.3  12.4  12.5  12.6  12.7  12.8 | The UKSPF has been described as a successor programme to European Structural Funds that aimed to tackle inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of the country whose economies are furthest behind. Relevant dates were highlighted in the previous report to the Brexit Working Group on **17 August 2020** although there was little detail around the quantum, programmes covered or the delivery mechanism.  Partners across the Highlands & Islands have been very proactive in trying to influence the direction of the UKSPF and the detail around this was also highlighted in the previous report to the Brexit Working Group on **17 August 2020** alongside the [work](https://www.gov.scot/groups/consultation-on-the-replacement-for-european-structural-and-investment-funds-steering-group/) done by the Scottish Government’s Steering Group on the replacement for EU Structural Funds  On **9 September 2020** the UK Government introduced the new [UK Internal Market Bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-internal-market-bill-introduced-today) which, if enacted, will enable the UK Government to provide financial assistance to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland with new powers to spend taxpayers’ money previously administered by the EU from January 2021 onwards. It specifically mentions investments in communities and businesses nationwide with powers covering infrastructure, economic development, culture, sport, and support for educational, training and exchange opportunities both within the UK and internationally – much of which were previously done at an EU level. The accompanying text to the Bill suggests that this approach will allow the UK Government to meet its commitments to deliver replacements for EU programmes, such as a UK Shared Prosperity Fund, replacing bureaucratic EU structural funds and at a minimum match the size of those funds in each nation. This looks a likely route map for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.  This approach was confirmed by Paul Sculley MP, Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets during a radio interview on **30 September 2020** with Good Morning Scotland when he confirmed that funds previously given by the EU to the Scottish Government will, in future, be administered by the UK Government. On **7 October 2020** members of the Brexit Working Group were sent a transcript of this interview and a Ministerial letter in response to this radio interview by for Trade, Investment and Innovation Ivan McKee MSP  On **15 October** **20** a planned meeting between the Scottish & UK Governments to discuss the development of the UKSPF was [cancelled](https://www.gov.scot/news/call-for-urgent-meeting-on-funding/). It will now go ahead after the UK Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), which is expected to contain full details of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). No date has been set for the CSR.  **Arctic**  Highland Council, via their membership of the Highlands & Islands European Partnership, have kept up links with the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation (NORA) which consists of partners from Greenland, Iceland, The Faroes and Western Norway.  NORA are keen to move onto a new cooperative initiative in the new year. The plan is for a new Hackathon but to have it as a physical two-day event in Scotland – potentially March 2021. The previous Hackathon, which was sponsored by HIEP resulted in a number of positive outcomes for Highland and was reported in the previous report to the Brexit Working Group. The proposed topic will be digital health in rural areas which will investigate the creativity of younger people in more sparsely populated areas. It may involve the east coast of the US and Atlantic Canada. NORA will subsidise travel costs and there will be a broader programme to pull together. There is an opportunity for HIEP to get involved again. This has been shared with the Scottish Government Arctic Unit.  The Arctic Unit at the Scottish Government are planning a series of events from **October 2020** until **February 2021**. The Scottish Government overseas offices will be involved. It is expected that there will be 2 or 3 events a month and they will dovetail with the [Arctic Policy Framework](https://www.gov.scot/publications/arctic-connections-scotlands-arctic-policy-framework/). The first webinar linked into the European Week of Regions & Cities event on the [circular economy](https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/programme/sessions/1609_en) and involved Comhairle nan Eilean Siar speaking about the [Outer Hebrides Local Energy Hub](https://communityenergyscotland.org.uk/ohleh.asp). This was presented under the HIEP banner and involved working with the [Northern Sparsely Populated Areas](http://www.nspa-network.eu/). Brexit Working Group Members were advised of the webinars by e-mail on **13 October 2020.** All webinars will now be made available on a YouTube playlist after the live event at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRW_0wGVvopWBHjM7-Eptzwz96V7Q-vd->  **Summary of Ongoing Preparations**  Businesses being updated and assisted by Business Gateway, HIE, Chambers of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses. HMRC and Industry bodies have written to businesses to make them aware of new obligations. The UK Government’s [Check, Change, Go website](https://www.gov.uk/transition?gclid=CL2LupnTi-wCFQnrGwodidkDCA) is regularly advertised and the Scottish Government’s information on the UK’s exit from the EU can be found [here](https://www.mygov.scot/brexit/)  Environmental Standards via Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland are pursuing both Governments for additional funding to deal with EU Exit. This is supported by SOLACE and COSLA  Angus MacLeod has given a number of presentations and updates on Brexit to Business Gateway on **23 September**, the Executive Unit & Heads of Service on **28 September**, the Recovery Board on **7 October,** Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Business Liaison Group on **8 October** and the European Enterprise Network on **14 October**. The latest presentation is attached.  A Scottish Government Borders Stakeholder Group has been established to discuss the policy, delivery and designations of BCP’s in Scotland and to provide support. The remit of this group is to assist all potential points of entry in Scotland to have the information which they need in order to prepare for the end of the transition period and to provide a place for issues relating to border delivery to be raised with the Scottish Government.  UK Government launched a £200 million fund for ports to build new facilities. The fund is targeted at those ports that have the space to build new border infrastructure on their current sites so that they are ready to handle new customs requirements under the new Border Operating Model  The Local Resilience Partnership has started to consider preparedness, self-assessments, gap testing & exercising. On **7 December 2020** the National Co-ordination Centre (NCC) will stand-up to begin familiarisation and the Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR) will activate. Concurrency is being identified as a significant risk and a Scotland wide sub-group is being set up to look at concurrency issues and to provide Resilience partners with a concurrency toolkit  Highland Council have appointed single points of contact within each Service to look at impacts of Brexit in their areas of responsibility. They form an EU Exit tactical group and have responsibility for updating their Business Continuity Plans to reflect EU Exit issues. This will feed into the Corporate Risk Register.  EU Exit information is fed into the Brexit Working Group and the Recovery Board | |
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