

# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **ERA Transition Programme delivery** |
| **DATE** | **7 July 2020** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

The UK left the EU on the 31st January 2020. The transition period provided for in the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU will expire on the 31st December 2020.

Delivery on the scale necessary and to such tight timescales looked very difficult prior to the arrival of the Covid 19 crisis. It now looks extremely challenging.

The UK Government has dismissed the Welsh Government’s calls to give businesses and governments additional time to prepare and has formally advised the EU that it would not seek to extend the transition period. This opportunity formally expired on the 1st July 2020.

There are now just over six months to deliver all the systems, processes, infrastructure, legislation, frameworks and trained personnel necessary to be ready for the 1st January 2021.

All of this has to be delivered in the context of ongoing emergency response and recovery from the Covid crisis which is consuming efforts in government and in businesses, and is likely to do so for some time.

Furthermore, delivery is hampered by considerable uncertainty as we await the outcome of trade negotiations with the EU, further clarity on the UK’s border arrangements and precise detail, agreed with the EU, on the operation of the Protocol on Northern Ireland which will have implications throughout the UK. The UK Government’s command paper provides no such clarity.

Indeed, such outcomes may not emerge until much later in the year, providing little time for governments to incorporate the necessary legal and systems changes or for businesses to understand new rules and adapt business models accordingly. It is difficult to assess the costs of this or to make any sound analysis of the likely impacts but there will be additional burdens for business.

It is unsurprising, that the UK Government seeks to introduce plans for light touch import border controls as an interim measure in order to extend the December deadline.

However, it is a limited concession, far from the extension to the transition period that we have advocated and in order to deal with all the challenges of delivery we will have to prioritise our efforts to focus on the delivery of critical elements of the transition programme that must be in place by the 1st January 2021.

I, and my officials continue to work with counterparts in the UK Government and other devolved administrations in order to identify and deliver on these priorities despite the continued pressures around Covid 19 and the uncertain context around the UK-EU relationship and trade deals with other countries.