



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP (Chair)
Exiting the EU Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our reference: CDL/00319

11 September 2019

Dear Hilary,

Operation Yellowhammer: planning assumptions

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your EU Exit Select Committee last week. You were, naturally, interested in Operation Yellowhammer, the Government's planning for a reasonable worst case scenario in the event of a no deal Brexit.

We are currently updating the assumptions for Operation Yellowhammer but in light of the motion brought forward by the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP that was passed in the House of Commons on Monday night, I thought it would be helpful to publish the Operation Yellowhammer document based on assumptions drawn up under the last Government. This document is complete save for one section that has been marked as redacted on the basis of its commercial sensitivity. I am, of course, happy to offer the opportunity for Privy Counsellors to read the full unredacted version in person.

It is also my intention, as I stated at your committee, to publish revised assumptions in due course alongside a document outlining the mitigations the Government has put in place and intends to put in place. I hope to publish these as soon as possible and will write to you shortly with publication plans.

As you will be aware, by longstanding convention the Government does not release Cabinet and Cabinet Sub Committee papers. This is an important principle stated within the Ministerial Code and recognised by the exemption at section 35 of the FOI Act to protect the requirement for Ministers to receive free and frank advice and to maintain the ability to engage in open discussion, in the public interest, in order to reach a collective decision. It is important to note that this document is not a formal Cabinet Committee paper and so its release does not compromise this principle.

Finally, during the debate on 9 September, the Shadow Secretary for Exiting the EU incorrectly stated that the Yellowhammer assumptions represent a 'most likely scenario' and are a Brexit 'impact assessment'. I should reiterate that the document is neither an impact assessment, nor a prediction of what is most likely to happen. It describes what could occur in a reasonable worst case scenario, thus providing a deliberately stretching context for government planning to ensure that we are prepared for Exit.

I am copying this letter to the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP, the Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP and the Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP.

I am also publishing this letter on Gov.uk, so that this is available to all MPs and members of the public.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP