

# **Gordon Brown challenges Prime Minister Johnson**

**Gordon Brown has challenged the Prime Minister over what he says are dishonest claims that underestimate the risk to medical supplies for vulnerable NHS patients and of sharp food and fuel price rises that will wreak havoc with family budgets.**

Referring to the Yellowhammer report during a speech at the Churchill Theatre in Edinburgh yesterday evening – and in a separate letter to Boris Johnson – the former PM pointed out that the evidence against a no-deal Brexit is multiplying every day.

Mr Brown said: “More than one million medical consignments come in from Europe every single day, 37million a month and 400million in a year.

“Notwithstanding the emergency plans that are rightly being made to stockpile and to fly medicines in and to issue a ‘significant shortages protocol’, the commercial director of the NHS has already gone further than the Government’s ‘worst case scenario’ document in foreseeing’ significant ‘disruption for six months and ‘severe’ problems for three months – not least because 75 per cent of medical supplies come in through Dover.

“As a result the British Medical Association has warned that with the health service “already routinely overwhelmed by seasonal pressures”, the addition of another, complicating factor is certain to dramatically exacerbate that problem”.

“Firstly, insulin is what keeps many diabetics alive and one million of more than three million diabetics in the UK need it. While there is a plan to stockpile 16 weeks’ worth, the most used insulin types come from pharmaceutical manufacturers outside the UK, so that any disruption of that supply at ports creates huge problems.

“Secondly, Epipens – life saving injectors for serious allergies which arrive from mainland Europe – where shortages last year led providers to extend existing use-by dates, to bring out-of-date injectors back into use; and to cut back on standard prescriptions from two to one pens.

“Thirdly, radio-isotopes – particularly essential to diagnose or treat conditions including cancer – come mainly from abroad and they cannot easily be stored because radioactivity decays have a short, effective life. The Royal College of Radiologists has warned of the risks to patients and I understand that during a recent ‘worst case scenario’ trial, the treatment was simply not available to one Scots liver cancer sufferer.

“Fourthly, on flu vaccines, we already rely on five million doses imported every year, mainly from Europe.

“But with a new more lethal flu strain discovered recently in Australia and flu vaccines being reconfigured to meet a new challenge, we now know that because of the new version at least one million doses cannot be ready in sufficient time to be imported before October 31st and now may not come in quickly enough after that date – putting at risk, according to the Royal College of Physicians, the supply of vaccines for vulnerable, disabled patients.

“Given the information we now have, the Prime Minister must do far more than meet his guarantee that medical supplies will be available for everyone for life-saving treatments.

“Nor can he guarantee that our food supplies – 30 per cent of

which come from mainland Europe – can come in uninterrupted without, as the Cabinet Secretary fears, pushing food prices up by 10 per cent.

“Prices will rise if the flow of trucks through the main UK ports, notably Dover, drop – as forecast in the reasonable worst case scenario – and this level of disruption continued for weeks – something unprecedented in peacetime Britain.

“Frankly, it is a disgrace that Britain depends on food banks and it is a tragedy that we are now seeing food banks forced to the wall just to afford to buy the food that people need.

“And with British energy supply relying on the energy inter-connector with mainland Europe, gas and electricity prices, which rose between 16-18 per cent after the 2016 referendum as the pound devalued, could rise again – a factor the government has had to recognise in Yellowhammer but which would hit poorest households most.”

Brown said that he had taken the step of writing to Boris Johnson because of what he knew about the risk to medical supplies and the precarious position of food banks.

He also said that that more than 2,000 faith leaders have signed a letter to the PM warning of the risk to the vulnerable. SUSTAIN, an alliance of charities related to food and farming, has said we now need a hardship fund to compensate for rising food and fuel prices.

Brown added: “The truth is that we are not taking back control but losing control – of medical supplies and food and energy prices.

“The worst-case scenario document downplays the risks to medical supplies, the threat to household budgets and the damage inflicted on the most vulnerable.

“We now know from Yellowhammer that no-deal Brexit is an

unnecessary act of self harm but Ministers are still not telling the truth about the sheer scale of the self-inflicted wounds.”