

Call for putting the brakes on Brexit

A poll announced today shows that two thirds of people in the UK want the government to request an extension to the Brexit talks. They want the government to concentrate on dealing with coronavirus instead.

The Scottish figures are even higher with 78% in favour of a brake on Brexit.

Ian Murray, MP for Edinburgh South, said: "It is simply impossible to secure a Brexit deal that protects businesses and workers before the end of the year." "This is not a time for constitutional politics. This is a time for working together, both within the UK and with the EU." "The UK Government needs to formally apply for an extension to the transition period so that all focus remains on addressing the coronavirus outbreak."

The SNP have called for the government to hit the pause button too while they continue to pressure the UK Chancellor to give everyone a guaranteed basic income. They say that the latest package of support for the self-employed falls short of what is needed.

Dr Philippa Whitford SNP MP said: "The COVID-19 outbreak has gripped us all – regardless of politics or borders – and it is vital that governments here in the UK and abroad work collaboratively to combat the pandemic.

"Businesses, individuals and households across the UK are already under intense pressure and financial strain in dealing with the crisis – with many losing their incomes and a significant number of businesses facing an uncertain future.

"It is impossible for businesses and others to prepare for

life outside the EU while coping with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis at the same time, and many might struggle to survive the second blow of a hard Brexit at the end of this year.

“Continuing talks and hurtling towards the transition period deadline would be irresponsible and an act of economic and social self-harm.

“It is now vital that the UK government hits pause on all Brexit negotiations and immediately seeks an extension to the transition period to remove the uncertainty and instability.

“The SNP Scottish Government made the difficult but responsible decision to pause work on preparing for an independence referendum this year. The UK government must now mirror that step so that we can focus on protecting our citizens and delivering financial support to everyone in society.”

Best for Britain CEO Naomi Smith said: “It’s simply not reasonable to expect we will have tied up negotiations with the EU by the end of the year while dealing with a warlike emergency. Nor is it desirable.

“By thinking it can complete both challenges at once, the UK Government would be setting itself up for failure with profound economic consequences.

“Most people just want the government to get on with the job at hand so that lives can be saved and normality restored as quickly as possible.

“This is particularly the case in Scotland, where nearly four-fifths of people support an extension, which has also been called for by the Scottish Government.

“The country is simply not in a place to weather two storms at the moment.”

HOPE not hate CEO Nick Lowles said: “EU schemes like the Early Warning and Response System and the ventilator procurement programme are critical tools for responding to this urgent

public health crisis.

“Healthcare workers are doing a fantastic job, but they cannot fight this disease alone. They need all the help they can get. “The Government must put politics aside and urgently seek participation in these schemes. It would be foolhardy for ideology to get in the way of practical measures to keep people safe.”

The same poll also found that Brits want the Government to seek membership of the EU Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) for medical emergencies, after it emerged earlier this month that the Whitehall Department for Health had been unsuccessful in lobbying Number 10 to remain a member.

A total of 65 per cent of people in the UK, rising to 80 per cent in Scotland, want the UK Government to seek membership of the EWRS.

The EWRS was set up in 1998 to ‘allow exchange of information on risk assessment and risk management for more timely, efficient and coordinated public health action’.

The Focaldata poll was commissioned by cross-party campaign group Best for Britain and HOPE not hate. The survey of 2,022 UK adults was conducted between 20 and 23 March.

The call for an extension to the transition period has been made by numerous bodies and pressure groups, including the Scottish Government.