



The North West Northern Group held its autumn event at the Castle Green Hotel in Kendal, Cumbria on 29th September. The overriding theme was Brexit and we were provided with a series of presentations that covered a variety of aspects that affect the public sector.



Mike Thomas began the day with an engaging session on "The impact of Brexit on place".

He described Brexit as a divorce with a settlement to pay, with both sides having varying and potentially conflicting priorities.

Mike discussed the impact that loss of EU funding will have on different regions, communities and the public sector in general beyond 2020.

Delegates were invited to share their opinions using voting buttons, which highlighted common concerns and priorities. Mike encouraged the development of Brexit plans within organisations. He discussed Place Analytics, Grant Thornton's market analysis tool, which can be used to highlight areas that may need intervention to fill a funding gap.



Professor Whyman followed with a thought provoking session covering "Brexit - What we know, what we think we know and where do we go from here".

He discussed the possibility that Brexit is merely a bump in the road rather than a cliff edge scenario. He questioned the use of the terms 'hard' and 'soft' Brexit but described the range of options available. He discussed the difficulties in achieving greater independence whilst also maintaining a close link with the EU in

terms of market access.

Professor Whyman questioned the reliability of the studies frequently quoted in the media, suggesting they are based on outdated data and a 'best guess' rather than fact.

He outlined the alternative models of future trading relationships available to the UK, including Customs Union, Free Trade Agreement and WTO rules based on a Most Favoured Nation basis.

Finally, he suggested the UK need to offer consequences to the EU in order to progress negotiations in the UK's favour.



Beginning the afternoon session, Brian Sloan, Deputy Agent for the North West, Bank of England, delivered a presentation covering the "UK Economic Outlook".

Brian outlined the role of the Bank, including the Monetary Policy and Financial Policy Committees.

He set the current economic scene by sharing the Bank's latest data for the UK including growth, consumer demand, inflation, import prices, goods price inflation, real earnings growth and unemployment figures.

Brian talked through the economic outlook as a result of Brexit and the possible impact on the economy. He also gave an insight into the tools available to the Bank of England to cope with these changes.

Next, Penny Owen from North West Employers examined the "Workforce Impacts of Brexit". She considered the social care labour market as an example, looking at potential implications for the workforce and employers.

Some 7% of social care staff are EU nationals make up 5% of the NHS work force. This is against a backdrop of an expected 18% increase in social care needs by 2025. To become self-sufficient and develop the skills needed in the absence of those currently available could take a decade.

However, it was possible to determine the impact that Brexit would have and build the response into medium term plans.



Penny encouraged us all to discuss the impacts in our own organisations and assess what plans we had in place.

David Chefneux provided the final presentation and provided a review of the risks and opportunities around Brexit and an economical snapshot of where we are now. David suggested the economy was at the heart of the issue; Brexit would be judged by the state of the economy. David examined a number of metrics from the financial markets' domestic economic data, including the savings ratio; something which had reduced significantly over the last three years. He presented Capita's forecast of PWLB rates and provide a summary of conclusions and what likely impacts on organisations.

Ian Cosh, the Group Chair, then thanked the speakers and also those attending for their support.