

News from the Brexit Cliff Edge

7th Mar 2019

News Highlights

Welcome to the Brexit Cliff Edge

- Bombardier the most important employer in the Unionist strongholds of Northern Ireland, is putting pressure on the DUP to drop its objections to the PM's Brexit deal. It is privately warning of consequences for Northern Ireland jobs and investment, were a hard Brexit to occur
- Vauxhall parent company, Groupe PSA, made it clear that a future decision on investment in the production of electric and hybrid cars, at its Ellesmere Port plant, would not happen until Brexit is resolved. CEO Carlos Tavares said, in his opinion, a No Deal scenario would be a disaster both for Britain and continental Europe
- The OECD is slashing its growth forecast for the UK. Even with a Brexit deal, it sees the UK growing by only 0.8%, adding that without a deal this number would be significantly lower. The OECD also said that No Deal and a move to WTO trade terms would shave 2% off UK GDP over the next two years.
- The Bank of England has activated a 'crisis-era' liquidity swap line with the European Central Bank to keep foreign exchange markets functioning throughout the Brexit period. So, in the event of a No Deal Brexit, the UK remains on 'liquidity and life support support' from Frankfurt in order to survive
- A poll of foreign exchange dealers by Reuters predicts a 9% fall in the value of Sterling in the immediate aftermath of the UK leaving without a deal, though the value would mostly recover later in the year
- LSE academics wrote a blog discussing how Brexit has hit the value of UK firms. In it, the authors cite a February survey by the Institute of Directors, which said 29% of UK companies have relocated, or plan to relocate, some operations abroad due to Brexit uncertainty
- A study by WhoCanFixMyCar, spoke to a network of independent UK garages and found that 1-in-6 have been stockpiling parts ahead of Brexit. More than half of the garages predicted parts will become more expensive post Brexit and availability of some may be in doubt
- The post-Brexit necessity for all EU citizens to get themselves put onto a register in order to ask for 'settled status' from the Home Office, when in many cases they have been living in the UK, have families and have lived here for years, has been called demeaning and insulting
- The Royal College of Radiologists has told doctors to prepare for possible delays in getting some drugs used to detect cancer if there is a no deal Brexit
- Trains from Paris to London were delayed, and there were huge queues, as French customs staff staged a Brexit style security check in at the Gare du Nord. The work to rule was to ask the government for a boost to the workforce, in order to deal with the huge increase in customs checks after the UK quits the EU
- Negotiations between UK Attorney General, Geoffrey Cox and Michel Barnier seem to have stalled. Regardless, Theresa May's spokesperson insisted the 'meaningful vote on Mrs May's Brexit deal' promised for next Tuesday will still go ahead
- The government was defeated in the House of Lords, over a meaningful vote on future trade deals, by a Labour amendment to a bill, which makes it an objective of the government to pursue a free trade deal allowing the UK to stay in a customs union after Brexit

- Irish PM Leo Varadkar said he had no legal texts or draft texts to consider after the latest round of UK-EU negotiations.
- The UK was asked by the EU to table an acceptable remedy to the need for a backstop to the Irish border issue. EU negotiators said they were happy to work across the weekend to secure a deal, if an acceptable deal was proposed. The UK insisted it had already tabled an acceptable proposal
- The DUP said it would not back Theresa May`s deal without fresh guarantees on the Irish backstop
- The Daily Telegraph ran an article by hardline Eurosceptic and former Tory MP Stewart Jackson, which said that Brexiteers are playing a long game and would never vote for Theresa May`s miserable deal
- Jeremy Corbyn reached out across the aisle to One Nation Tories to discuss additional Brexit options. The group discussed a Norway + or EEA solution. Nick Boles, Oliver Letwin and others were involved on the Tory side
- Former Conservative Party Attorney General Dominic Grieve is meeting senior members of Emmanuel Macron`s government on Thursday, to discuss how best to extend Article 50 with agreement from the EU side
- The Kyle-Wilson amendment offering Labour abstention on Theresa May`s Brexit plan, in return for a guarantee that she would put her plan and remain in the EU on the ballot paper in a referendum, was once again discussed by The Guardian
- It was revealed that Labour Shadow Minister, Gloria del Piero is organising and persuading colleagues to join her in stopping a new Brexit referendum, despite the party now committing to a People`s Vote
- A Kings Fund survey said public satisfaction with the performance of the NHS now stands at its lowest level in more than a decade
- The government was accused of leaving UK businesses in the dark, after news broke that it was planning to cut import tariffs under a No Deal Brexit by up to 90%. Businesses cannot prepare as they don`t know what a Brexit agreement looks like yet. In addition, the government said it won`t publish any tariff details until AFTER the vote on Theresa May`s Brexit Withdrawal Agreement next Tuesday, which makes forward planning by businesses next to impossible

Jobs at Risk

Bombardier presses DUP to back Theresa May`s Brexit deal

Bombardier, the most important employer in the Unionist strongholds of Northern Ireland, is putting pressure on the region`s Democratic Unionist party to drop its objections to Prime Minister Theresa May`s Brexit deal as a critical vote in Westminster nears. The Canadian aircraft manufacturer, which employs almost 4,000 people at four separate Belfast factories, has kept a relatively low public profile over Brexit compared with other UK-based manufacturers. But the increasing threat of Britain leaving without a deal has prompted Bombardier to warn the DUP, which has fiercely criticised Mrs May`s deal in the past, of the serious consequences on its Northern Ireland operations of a hard exit, according to people familiar with the discussions.

<https://www.ft.com/content/e144e72a-3f6b-11e9-9bee-efab61506f44>

Vauxhall: No further Ellesmere Port investment until Brexit outcome decided

Production of electric and hybrid cars will not be introduced to Ellesmere Port until the outcome of Brexit is decided, Vauxhall's parent company has warned. Carlos Tavares, chief of Groupe PSA, said that investment could not be ploughed into the Cheshire plant before the political situation becomes clearer. Speaking to ITV News, Mr Tavares argued that the introduction of electric cars would represent a "very big" business decision for PSA. He also offered his own opinion that a no-deal

Brexit scenario would be a "disaster" for both Britain and continental Europe.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-03-05/vauxhall-no-further-ellesmere-port-investment-until-brexit-outcome-decided>

'No investment' at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port plant until Brexit sorted

The boss of Vauxhall's parent company has said there will be no further investment in the Ellesmere Port plant until the fate of Brexit is known. Carlos Tavares, chief executive of Groupe PSA, which took over Vauxhall in 2017, also warned a no-deal outcome would be a "disaster" for Britain and the rest of Europe. Mr Tavares made the comments during an ITV News interview at the annual Geneva car show on Tuesday.

<https://www.wirralglobe.co.uk/news/17479771.no-investment-at-vauxhall-ellesmere-port-plant-until-brexit-sorted/>

Economic Impact

OECD warns no-deal Brexit could plunge UK into recession

The OECD has slashed its growth forecasts for the UK and warned that a no-deal Brexit could plunge the economy into recession. It now predicts that Britain will see GDP increase by just 0.8% this year even with a deal - and that without one the outlook will be "significantly weaker". The economic think-tank said the increase in tariffs resulting from a no-deal outcome and move to WTO trade terms would take 2% off GDP over the next two years. It also pointed to the risks of supply chain bottlenecks, declining business confidence and financial market disruption - which could add to the adverse effects on the economy already seen since the 2016 EU referendum.

<https://news.sky.com/story/oecd-warns-no-deal-brexit-could-plunge-uk-into-recession-11656597>

No-deal Brexit could cause sharp unemployment hike - NI civil service chief

A no-deal Brexit could cause a sharp rise in unemployment in Northern Ireland, the head of the civil service said. Inability to prepare, EU tariffs and significant changes to exports could cause business distress, failure or the relocation of some companies to the Republic, a report from David Sterling said.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/nodeal-brexit-could-cause-sharp-unemployment-hike-ni-civil-service-chief-37881969.html>

European Central Bank comes to UK's aid as crisis-era swap lines activated

The Bank of England has announced it will activate crisis-era emergency swap lines with the European Central Bank (ECB) to keep foreign exchange markets functioning throughout the Brexit period. The Bank said it was taking the action to ensure that banks do not run short of cash if there is a no-deal Brexit. The move, predicted in a Sky News report last year, underlines that even in the event of a hard Brexit, in which the UK abruptly severs its ties with the European Union, the UK would remain reliant on liquidity and support from Frankfurt.

<https://news.sky.com/story/crisis-era-swap-lines-to-return-ahead-of-brexit-11655689>

Sterling to slide to \$1.20 if no Brexit deal agreed - Reuters poll

Sterling would lose around 9 percent of its current value against the dollar and trade at \$1.20 in the immediate aftermath of Britain leaving the EU without a deal, a Reuters poll of foreign exchange strategists predicted.

https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-forex-poll-sterling-idUKKCN1QO04K?utm_campaign=trueAnthem%3A+Trending+Content&utm_content=5c80b4df1adf640001fda35d&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=twitter

ECB cut UK interest rates by pumping €300bn into Britain

Europe's money-printing programme pumped hundreds of billions of pounds into the UK, the central bank for central banks has found, pushing down interest rates even further in Britain. Quantitative easing (QE) pushes down long-term interest rates in an effort to stimulate economic growth. But because this was happening on a grand scale just across the Channel from Britain's major financial centre, as much as €300bn of the European Central Bank's QE ended up buying assets from

institutions in the UK in the scheme's first three years.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/03/06/ecb-cut-uk-interest-rates-pumping-300bn-britain/>

How Brexit has hit the value of UK firms

In a wide ranging look at Brexit and its relationship to the business decisions being taken the authors say: "according to a recent survey by the Institute of Directors, 29% of UK companies have relocated, or plan to relocate some operations abroad due to Brexit uncertainty"

https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/how-brexit-has-hit-the-value-of-uk-firms/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BritishPoliticsAndPolicyAtLse+%28British+politics+and+policy+at+LSE%29&fbclid=IwAR1OKSdq0mUoSGCKlwbDjr-5eJjj5zi2ySzqLQ7hD6NvUJMZG6CpR6jGLo

Administrative Fall Out

Garages predict Brexit price rises and parts shortages

As many as 45 percent of garages have taken steps to get ready for Brexit (and possibility of 'no deal') by switching to UK-based suppliers. A study by WhoCanFixMyCar surveyed a network of independent garages across the UK. It found that one in six garages have been stockpiling parts ahead of the projected EU exit date of Friday 29 March. More than half (52 percent) of garages anticipate an increase in labour costs after Britain has left the EU. And almost two thirds believe drivers will be hesitant to get repairs done for fear of cost increases. More than half of garages also predict that parts will be more expensive, with 42 percent saying the availability of parts in the UK post-Brexit was in doubt.

<https://www.motoringresearch.com/car-news/garages-brexit-price-rises/>

UK's Brexit preparations 'shambolic', haulage chief says

A recent trial involving 80 trucks had been a farce he said as 10,000 trucks go through the UK port of Dover daily. "How could you possibly make that a useful test? "We are 17 working days from a potential no deal Brexit which will be very unfortunate indeed for truck drivers facing 20km long queues and for the rest of us who rely on supplies, 95% of which come on trucks."

<https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/uks-brexit-preparations-shambolic-haulage-chief-says-909034.html>

EU citizens brand registration 'insulting' ahead of Brexit

The plan is crazy, it is deeply unsettling. Under UK government plans, around 185,000 people living for years but EU citizens by birth have to apply for settled status after Brexit and go on a register. With 25 days to go until the UK leaves the EU, STV News heard some of their concerns.

<https://stv.tv/news/politics/1436008-eu-citizens-brand-registration-insulting-ahead-of-brexit/>

Brexit 'likely to cause cancer test delays'

Hospitals are likely to experience delays to cancer testing and treatment regardless of the result of next week's Brexit vote, BBC Newsnight has learned. The Royal College of Radiologists has told doctors to prepare for possible delays for some drugs used to detect cancer if there is a no-deal Brexit. It says clinicians should reduce their workload in the days after 29 March, when the UK is due to leave the EU.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47462762>

Huge queues as French customs staff stage Brexit drill for Eurostar at Gare du Nord in Paris

Train services from Paris to London were delayed and there were huge queues today as French customs staff staged "Brexit-style" security checks at the Gare du Nord. The border officials imposed a "work-to-rule" as they demanded a boost to their workforce to deal with extra checks after the UK quits the European Union. As passengers and trains were hit by delays of up to two hours, one border guard declared: "This will be what it is like after Brexit. Back to 1970s."

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/huge-queues-as-french-customs-staff-stage-brexit-drill-for-eurostar-at-gar>

e-du-nord-in-paris-a4084316.html

A third of British billionaires have moved to a tax haven

A third of British billionaires have moved to tax havens after an exodus over the past decade, a Times investigation has found. They are among 6,800 Britons controlling 12,000 UK firms from low-tax jurisdictions. The Exchequer is denied billions a year but many of the bosses still reap the benefits of British assets. Some have bankrolled political parties while living offshore as successive governments have failed to enact a law passed in 2009 that would have banned large donations from anyone resident abroad for tax purposes. Many have been awarded honours or hold titles, with at least one viscount, one baron, six knights and one dame among the billionaires.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-third-of-british-billionaires-have-moved-to-a-tax-haven-zk6q53rtd>

What would a no-deal Brexit mean for your supermarket shop? - Which? News

How will a no deal Brexit impact food prices, and will there be food shortages? What foods will be most impacted? We've spoken to the British Retail Consortium to better understand how your supermarket shop would be affected

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/2019/03/what-would-a-no-deal-brexit-mean-for-your-supermarket-shop/>

My quest for a Brexit-proof passport

Marek Kohn recounts a personal journey as he sought a passport from the country of his father's (not his) birth, Poland, across a two year time period as Brexit forces many people to think about who they are and where they belong

<https://www.ft.com/content/526292ea-3a1c-11e9-b72b-2c7f526ca5d0?segmentId=0052c4bc-c54e-19c6-b165-8800c56b8254&campaign=brexit>

Political Shenanigans

Brexit meaningful vote will go ahead, says No 10, despite talks stalling

Downing Street has insisted the meaningful vote on Theresa May's Brexit deal will go ahead as promised on Tuesday, despite negotiations in Brussels stumbling. The prime minister's spokesman repeated the line on Wednesday that the government is determined to secure "legally binding changes" to the Irish backstop, despite the attorney general, Geoffrey Cox, returning empty-handed from the talks. Shortly before leaving Brussels, he conceded "strong views" had been expressed during three hours of "robust" discussions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/06/no-sign-of-progress-after-robust-brexit-talks-in-brussels>

Government defeated in Lords over meaningful vote on future trade deals

The government was defeated on Labour's amendment 13 in the House of Lords. The amendment makes it an "objective" of the government during negotiations to pursue a free trade deal allowing the UK to stay "in a customs union" with the EU after Brexit.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2019/mar/06/brexit-latest-news-pmqs-mays-offer-to-protect-workers-right-dismissed-as-worthless-by-labour-and-unions-politics-live>

Brexit negotiations descend into disarray as EU warns 'no solution' sight

Efforts by British negotiators to win changes to Theresa May's Brexit deal are going badly, after talks in Brussels broke up without any progress to report and the EU Commission warned that "no solution" is in sight. Exasperated Irish prime minister Leo Varadkar has said he had "no legal texts or draft legal texts to consider" following several rounds of meetings between the UK and EU. A spokesperson for the EU Commission said on Wednesday morning that "while the talks take place in a constructive atmosphere, discussions have been difficult" and that "no solution has been identified at this point that is consistent with the withdrawal agreement".

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-deal-negotiations-theresa-may-barnier-geoffrey-cox-irish-back-stop-a8809926.html>

Brexit: Theresa May prepares for Brussels trip in last ditch bid to secure deal changes

Theresa May is set to visit Brussels this weekend in an attempt to clinch changes to her Brexit deal ahead of a crunch Commons vote next week. The prime minister is expected to meet senior EU figures following negotiations over the last fortnight, as she desperately seeks tweaks in a bid to win the support of backbench Tory Brexiteers. Ms May also announced measures to shore up post-Brexit workers' rights, designed to maximise support for her deal among Labour MPs.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-deal-may-brussels-trip-changes-support-a8809051.html>

DUP won't back Brexit without guarantees on backstop, says MP

A senior Democratic Unionist party MP has insisted the party can only support Theresa May's revised Brexit deal if the withdrawal agreement itself is amended to make the Northern Ireland backstop time-limited, or allow the UK to withdraw unilaterally. Sammy Wilson, the DUP's Brexit spokesman, also dismissed worries about the impact on the region of a no-deal Brexit, saying warnings about this on Tuesday from the head of Northern Ireland's civil service were "politically motivated".

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/06/dup-wont-back-brexit-without-guarantees-on-backstop-says-mp>

Stalemate for Brexit backstop talks in Brussels

Talks to save Theresa May's Brexit deal stalled last night after European Union negotiators refused to give Geoffrey Cox, the attorney general, "reasonable" assurances on the Irish backstop. Three and half hours of talks in Brussels between Michel Barnier, the EU's lead negotiator, Mr Cox and Stephen Barclay, the Brexit secretary, ended in a bad-tempered stalemate. Negotiations will now go to the wire this Friday, running into the weekend, to try to find guarantees that will enable Mr Cox to change his legal advice on the Irish backstop before the crucial Brexit vote in the House of Commons next Tuesday. "There are very sensitive discussions. We are into the meat of the matter now.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/stalemate-for-brexit-backstop-talks-in-brussels-brnrnftx2t>

Can May finally get her Brexit deal through parliament?

By now, if Theresa May's Brexit strategy had gone to plan, the UK prime minister would be on the cusp of a famous victory. In her quest to secure House of Commons backing for her Brexit deal before Britain's March 29 scheduled departure date — and to reverse a previous, shattering defeat — Mrs May has been seeking the support of three vital groups of MPs. Here the FT looks at Mrs May's prospects of winning over each of the three groups.

<https://www.ft.com/content/7893266a-4024-11e9-b896-fe36ec32aece>

Brexit in 23 days: EU says still 'no solution' in negotiations

"Michel Barnier has informed...that while the talks take place in a constructive atmosphere, discussions have been difficult," said Margaritis Schinas, spokesman for the European Commission, the bloc's executive. "No solution has been identified at this point that is consistent with the withdrawal agreement, including the protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which will not be reopened," Schinas said.

<https://www.dw.com/en/brexit-in-23-days-eu-says-still-no-solution-in-negotiations/a-47794199>

Brexit: UK urged to table 'acceptable' backstop remedies

The UK has been urged to table fresh proposals within the next 48 hours to break the Brexit impasse. EU officials said they would work non-stop over the weekend if "acceptable" ideas were received by Friday to break the deadlock over the Irish backstop. The UK has said "reasonable" proposals to satisfy MPs' concerns about being tied to EU rules had already been made. There have been few visible signs of progress ahead of Parliament's second vote on the Brexit deal next Tuesday.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47476942?ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_linkname=news_central&ns_campaign=bbc_politics

Brexiteers are playing a long game, and will never vote for Theresa May's miserable deal

So, as we begin the Meaningful Vote Part 2 vortex, hurtling toward climax in the House of Commons next week, the Prime Minister has rolled the pitch with tasty sweeteners to Labour MPs in Leave-supporting seat, to save her miserable deal from yet another shellacking. It displays again a typically tone-deaf approach, speaking to a patrician mindset from Remainers, that all it really takes is a few baubles and soothing words about immigration and the whole sorry contraption can be pushed over the line: The UK would be locked permanently into international treaty obligations from which it will take years to disentangle.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/03/05/brexiteers-playing-long-game-will-never-vote-theresa-mays-miserable/>

Theresa May's rhetoric can be as populist as Trump's

An academic study, commissioned by the Guardian, involved close analysis of the speeches of leaders who have served 40 countries to ascertain levels of populist discourse. The surprising finding in relation to May is partly explained by Brexit, the issue that has defined her premiership and dominated the UK's political conversations since the referendum to leave the European Union in 2016. Researchers identified several examples where May offered a romanticised description of "ordinary working people" pitted against a self-serving elite, a defining feature of populism

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/06/theresa-may-british-prime-minister-populism-rhetoric-is-as-rife-as-in-donald-trump-speeches>

Exclusive: Dominic Grieve hosts French minister for discussions on Article 50 and second referendum

Remain Tory MPs will meet on Thursday with senior members of Emmanuel Macron's government to discuss extending Article 50 as a path to a second referendum, The Telegraph can reveal. Dominic Grieve, the former Attorney General, will hold a meeting with Nathalie Loiseau, the French Europe minister, and other senior French politicians in his office. It came as Nick Boles and Oliver Letwin, two Tory MPs pushing for a softer Brexit, held a meeting with Jeremy Corbyn to discuss their plans. They have backed calls for a Norway-style Brexit - described as "Common Market 2.0 - that would see Britain stay inside the European Economic Area after Brexit.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/03/06/exclusive-dominic-grieve-hosts-french-minister-discussions-article/>

How will next week's Brexit votes affect the UK economy, jobs and wages?

If no deal actually materialises, it seems likely we'd see a further significant fall in sterling, pushing up import prices and inflation, and reducing real wages. Considerably more worrying, however, would be the impact on consumer and business confidence, and hence spending. Businesses would be hit by rising input prices, resulting both from the fall in sterling and the need to replace EU imports with more expensive ones sourced from outside the EU.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/comment/brexit-votes-commons-uk-economy-jobs-wages-theresa-may-deal-a8809911.html>

The truth is out about Brexit - but there is a narrow road back to sanity

What the Kyle-Wilson amendment does is give the people a chance to choose between real options: either Brexit, via May's deal, or remain. Provided the amendment is in place, both are on the table, both are agreed by the EU, and both are implementable now. And it has a third advantage: it offers at least some hope of mending bridges. If, during the debate preceding the public vote, more MPs were to speak the truth about the Good Friday agreement, some Brexiteers who want greater freedom than May's deal offers might come to understand why any version of Brexit has to be so tightly constrained

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/06/brexit-kyle-wilson-amendment>

Labour shadow minister admits organising to stop new Brexit referendum - despite party

backing public vote

One of Jeremy Corbyn's shadow ministers has admitted to organising a campaign to stop a fresh Brexit referendum, despite Labour's backing for the policy. Gloria Del Piero refused to answer questions about how her campaigning could be squared with her frontbench role as a spokeswoman for justice issues. Critics said Mr Corbyn's "complete lack of leadership" on Brexit would be underlined if he allowed shadow ministers to openly oppose party policy to push for a second public vote.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-gloria-de-piero-brexit-second-referendum-policy-jeremy-corby-n-a8810801.html?fbclid=IwAR00lfxq-gEcwUXyG1u9I7-MoSrpMuuEUbd3FRxWm38cwKjCFhXGImmZGTM>

Labour launches bid to purge Independent Group MPs from Commons committees

The party will hold internal elections to determine who they want to take over the Labour places that were lost when former members defected last month. Select committee places are allocated on a party basis at the start of each Parliament following a General Election.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/labour-party/news/102298/labour-launches-bid-purge-independent-group-mps>

Jeremy Hunt vows to step up fight against election cyber-attacks

Jeremy Hunt is to promise the government will step up international efforts to prevent overseas cyber-attacks on elections, while insisting the UK has never succumbed to such outside interference. A number of groups have called for an investigation into allegations that Russia was behind interference before the 2016 EU referendum, and for a wider examination of the role of foreign companies in the campaign. In a speech in Glasgow, the foreign secretary will warn that without concerted global action, cyber-attacks could turn some elections into "tainted exercises, robbing the governments they produce of legitimacy". An advance trail of Hunt's speech said he would, however, be "making clear that we have seen no evidence of successful interference in UK polls".

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/07/jeremy-hunt-vows-to-step-up-fight-against-election-cyber-attacks>

Political Setbacks

Public satisfaction with the NHS 'drops to lowest level in over a decade'

Analysis by The King's Fund and Nuffield Trust of the 2018 British Social Attitudes survey found 53% of the public were satisfied with the health service, down 3% from the year before and at the lowest since 2007. The figure clashes with an historic high of 70% in 2010, which followed a decade of increasing satisfaction, from 38% in 2001.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/health-and-care/nhs/news/102334/public-satisfaction-nhs-drops-lowest-level-over-decade>

Theresa May Could Be Forced Into A Soft Brexit After Peers Back Customs Union Membership

MPs will have a chance to force Theresa May into a softer Brexit after peers passed an amendment calling on the government to "take all necessary steps" to form a customs union with the EU. Peers voted by 207 votes to 141, majority 66, to amend the trade bill in the House of Lords to make it the prime minister's objective to strike a UK-EU trade deal which includes a customs union. It means MPs will have a binding vote on customs union membership - a key Labour demand - when the legislation returns to the Commons in the coming weeks.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/theresa-may-could-be-forced-into-a-soft-brexit-after-peers-back-customs-union-membership_uk_5c8005f1e4b0e62f69e92591

Former Italian PM Paolo Gentiloni: 'Brexit biggest mistake by a European country since war'

Channel 4 spoke with the former Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, who described Brexit as the

biggest mistake by a European country since the Second World War in a wide ranging interview
<https://www.channel4.com/news/former-italian-pm-paolo-gentiloni-brexite-biggest-mistake-by-a-european-country-since-war>

Ryanair boss calls Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn 'idiots' and says Brexit should be reversed

The airline's chief executive warned: "It doesn't resolve any of the fundamental issues. And that is: the same people – Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Liam Fox – who were promising us for the last two years that this trade deal will be the easiest one in history, have failed to deliver anything in the last two years. "We'll be back here again at the end of 2020 wondering what the hell are the UK government are going to do?"

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/brexit-ryanair-michael-oleary-theresa-may-jeremy-corbyn-latest-a8810011.html>

A hostile environment for EU citizens?

In a no-deal scenario, these 3 or so million (assuming they wish to remain here) can apply for European Temporary Leave to Remain for up to 36 months. Then, EU citizens face further applications for a different immigration status from 1 January 2021 onwards.

<https://www.redpepper.org.uk/a-hostile-environment-for-eu-citizens/>

UK accused of not honouring dual citizenship commitments

Northern Ireland residents who wish to assert their Irish nationality and EU citizenship rights after Brexit are inadequately protected by the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, a delegation from Northern Ireland told the EU Brexit task force on Wednesday. UK Brexit secretary Stephen Barclay and attorney general Geoffrey Cox returned to London following fruitless "difficult" discussions with EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier on Tuesday evening.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/uk-accused-of-not-honouring-dual-citizenship-commitments-1.3816393?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fworld%2Feurope%2Fuk-accused-of-not-honouring-dual-citizenship-commitments-1.3816393#.XIAXoA20X2A.twitter>

Home Office to amend registration rules for vulnerable EU citizens

The Public Law Project, which acted on the JCWI's behalf, said: "Following key concessions to the claim by the home secretary, JCWI have today withdrawn their claim." It said the agreement would have implications for hundreds of thousands of citizens nervous about their status because they were elderly, a carer, a stay-at-home parent, mentally ill, a student, homeless or out of work through no fault of their own. As part of the settlement, the government has expressly confirmed that it will not refuse settled status to anyone who is "economically active", works part-time or those who do not have private health insurance.

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/06/home-office-amend-registration-rules-vulnerable-eu-citizens-charity-threat-judicial-review?CMP=share_btn_tw

Desperate 11th hour Brexit talks near collapse in Brussels after bitter clash between Attorney General and Michel Barnier

Eleventh hour talks for a new Brexit deal were last night on the verge of collapse as EU chiefs clashed bitterly with Cabinet ministers in Brussels. With just five days to go before a final showdown Commons vote, British and EU negotiators hit deadlock over a compromise on the Irish backstop. No10 admitted that Attorney General Geoffrey Cox's meeting with Michel Barnier was "difficult" and the pair had "a robust exchange of views" – diplomatic code for a blazing row. It even emerged that the senior eurocrat's deputy Sabine Weyand told EU ambassadors last night that the two sides are so far apart they will today discuss whether it's even worth holding any further meetings.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8578411/brexit-collapse-brussels/>

Liam Fox defends spending £100,000 on a podcast listened to by 8,400 people

Liam Fox was asked again if his podcast presented value for taxpayers' money, he said: "It depends how many of the businesses that actually listened to it actually became exporters. If all 9,000 who listened to it became exporters then I'd say that was a successful project. If none of them did, I would question its value for money but that will depend on the review that we have to get data."

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/liam-fox-defends-spending-100000-14094599>

Brexit: Jeremy Corbyn 'reaches out' to Tory MPs over Norway plan

Jeremy Corbyn has said he is "looking at all the options" to prevent a no-deal Brexit after he met Tory MPs to discuss alternatives to the PM's deal if it rejected again by Parliament. The Labour leader held talks with ex-Tory ministers Nick Boles and Sir Oliver Letwin, who favour a closer, Norway-style relationship with the EU. He said he had discussed the so-called "Common Market 2.0 option" but would not commit to backing it at this stage. The UK is due to leave on 29 March.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47477869>

Jeremy Corbyn working with Tory backbenchers to reach 'soft' Brexit deal

Jeremy Corbyn is working with Tory backbenchers to try to reach a 'soft' Brexit deal that can get the support of Parliament. The Labour leader held in-depth talks with a cross-party group of MPs who are backing a Norway-plus style Brexit. Afterwards, he said felt "more certain" and "more determined" than ever that a sensible compromise could be struck. Mr Corbyn hopes to secure a close economic relationship with the EU after Brexit that would keep both Leave and Remain voters happy. And he wants to move beyond Brexit to concentrate on crucial domestic issues that are currently being neglected.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/jeremy-corbyn-working-tory-backbenchers-14098202>

Labour HQ Staff Threaten Strike Action After Rejecting Below-Inflation Pay Offer

Labour party staff are considering strike action after rejecting a below-inflation pay offer made by general secretary Jennie Formby. In a move that would cause Jeremy Corbyn huge embarrassment, some workers at the party's HQ are threatening industrial action if a better deal fails to materialise, HuffPost UK has been told. On Wednesday, the GMB union's Labour branch rejected an offer of a £600 flat rate increase in salary, and later this week Unite colleagues are expected to follow suit, sources said.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/labour-hq-staff-threaten-strike-action-after-rejecting-below-inflation-pay-offer_uk_5c801277e4b06ff26ba51716

'We are at War' with Putin MPs told: his Aim is to Divide Europe

Dr Andrew Mumford answered the Committee's question What do these states do, what do they want? "Fundamentally they want to disrupt the decision-making process within competitor states," he told Parliament. "Essentially, acts of hybrid war try to put a competitor state on the horns of a dilemma. Overreaction looks like you are the belligerent one, under-reaction leaves elements of your national critical infrastructure at risk. ... Everything is done below the threshold of response. ... Those clear lines of command and control are not there, they are very murky." Donnelly told the committee he believes deterrence is to some extent 'impossible' and that the UK may need to actively wage hybrid war on its competitors - a tactic that the UK does not currently use - in order to deter attacks.

<https://bylinetimes.com/2019/03/06/we-are-at-war-with-putin-mps-told-his-aim-is-to-divide-europe/>

'Highly likely' GRU hacked UK institute countering Russian fake news

The National Crime Agency is leading an investigation into a suspected cyber attack on a British institute that seeks to counter Russian disinformation, Sky News can reveal. Whitehall sources said it is highly likely that Russia's military intelligence service carried out the hack-and-leak of files from the little-known Institute for Statecraft. The move may have been in response to Britain implicating

the GRU in the Salisbury spy poisoning last year and pledging to "shine a light" on the agency's covert activities, they said. Mr Donnelly, who speaks Russian and is an expert on the Kremlin and Russian military strategy, said the hackers used sophisticated techniques, not leaving behind easy-to-spot tracks, which he said was a further indication of a Kremlin-sponsored attack.

<https://news.sky.com/story/highly-likely-moscow-hacked-uk-agency-countering-russian-disinformation-11656539>

Calls for Northern Ireland Secretary Karen Bradley to resign over 'not crimes' claim

Northern Ireland Secretary Karen Bradley has faced calls to resign after telling MPs that killings by the military and police during The Troubles "were not crimes". Amid a backlash at her remarks, the cabinet minister was forced to return to the House of Commons hours later on Wednesday to clarify that she was "not referring to any specific cases". Ms Bradley continued: "The under 10% that were at the hands of the military and police were not crimes; they were people acting under orders and instructions, fulfilling their duties in a dignified and appropriate way."

<https://news.sky.com/story/calls-for-northern-ireland-secretary-karen-bradley-to-resign-over-not-crimes-claim-11657113>

Trade Deals/Negotiations

Businesses 'in dark' over plans to cut trade tariffs

Ministers were accused of leaving businesses in the dark last night as it emerged they could cut up to 90 per cent of import tariffs under a no-deal Brexit. Industry leaders expressed fears of a shock if Britain departed the European Union without an agreement this month and axed duties that shield domestic companies from foreign competition. Corporate concern over Brexit disruption was heightened after Sky News reported that the Department for International Trade planned to cut more than 80 per cent of tariffs on goods if Britain left the EU without a deal on March 29.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/business-in-dark-over-plans-to-cut-trade-tariffs-rjmx7xwv/>

Government accused of keeping tariff bonfire secret to avoid no-deal Brexit

The government is under fire over a "secret" plan to cut up to 90% of tariffs in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Sky News reported late on Tuesday that the government was planning to slash tariffs on 80%-90% of goods if the UK left with no deal, which would benefit consumers but damage the competitiveness of many British factories and farms. Anna Turley, a Labour MP on the business, energy and industrial strategy select committee, said the reported tariff cuts were "unbelievable". "Is the government giving up all pretence of Britain being able to make anything any more? This will open the door to floods of imports, from steel to ceramics," she tweeted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/06/brexit-government-accused-of-keeping-bonfire-of-the-tariffs-secret-to-avoid-no-deal>