

News from the Brexit Cliff Edge

29th Mar 2019

News Highlights

Welcome to the Brexit Cliff Edge

Car Production Falls Again

- UK car production levels slump for ninth consecutive month as industry boss warns no-deal Brexit would cause 'serious damage' to the sector

British Chambers of Commerce chief attacks handling of Brexit process

- Brexit: Business chief's attack on 'irresponsible' MPs - 'you've let us down'

NI Food & Drink Association accuses Brexiteers of peddling myths

- The NI Food and Drink Association said there is 'no good outcome' from a no-deal scenario and that Brexiteers were 'peddling myths about the WTO'

Sterling down on No Deal fears

- Sterling tumbles as opposition to Brexit deal grows

Police Scotland's Brexit Squad already busy

- Police Scotland has deployed a team of more than 300 officers on Brexit-related incidents in only a week since the team's inception

Brexit is now the top issue for any independence argument in Scotland

- Scots cite Brexit as 'single most important issue' when considering independence

Warning to health groups about stockpiling medicines

- Scots urged by Chief Medical Officer not to stockpile medication in run-up to Brexit

Fears over losing the European arrest warrant

- PSNI chief fears losing the European arrest warrant in event of no-deal Brexit

Most Scottish firms unprepared for No Deal Brexit

- Law firm Anderson Strathern reports that more than half of all Scottish firms have no contingency plans for a No Deal Brexit

Crazy like a Fox

- Liam Fox said we'll have all 40 EU free trade agreement signed so trade can continue as before when we leave the EU in 2017 - so no disruption. As of March 28th only 8 have been

signed

Theresa May gambles everything on one last roll of the dice

- Theresa May's deal is back, sort of. The government have submitted half of it - the Withdrawal Agreement - for a vote in Parliament on Friday. Thereby, not breaching Parliamentary convention by submitting exactly the same thing as last time (Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration)
- The PM's decision to offer her resignation if her deal passes the House of Commons is not winning favour with the DUP and a hardline Eurosceptic faction within her own party. Although, the vote is likely to be closer than her two previous defeats, much now depends on whether she can persuade Labour Party MPs to back her
- There may have been a good chance of Labour support, before Mrs May announced her imminent resignation. Now, Labour fears that a more hardline Eurosceptic leader of the Tory part may emerge and any promises made to the MPs could turn out to be worthless
- The European Commission has circulated a note to EU27 ambassadors in which it states that the UK's remaining options seem to be No Deal or a long delay to Brexit
- The EU is activating its full crisis mode plans for a No Deal Brexit. It will make paying the UK's full Brexit bill of £39bn a precursor of any future trade deal discussion
- All the potential candidates in waiting to become Prime Minister after Theresa May are moving to campaign mode. This is likely to play an important role in their decision making in this vital Brexit phase
- The Labour Party attacked the PM's decision to go for a split vote on her deal calling it a return to a blindfold Brexit
- ITV's Robert Peston points out that if Theresa May's vote did win through it locks down May 22nd as Brexit Day not April 12th as now
- A Sky News poll says more than half of all Britons are 'unconvinced' by the list of Theresa May's potential replacements
- The Revoke Article 50 and Remain petition is closing in on 6m signatures and has a debate next Monday
- Leader writers are slamming the Conservative Party for 'playground politics' which has caused the Brexit crisis
- News emerged the Department of Transport never held any face-to-face meetings with the backers of the ferry-less shipping firm Seaborne Freight at any time
- Sky pondered whether Theresa May was contemplating using a win in the Commons today as a pretext to leave the EU on the basis of that vote
- The Metropolitan Police are said to be very concerned by the threat of extreme violence on 'Brexit Day,' likely to come from a number of far right groups who plan to converge in London

Economic Impact

UK car production levels slump for ninth consecutive month as industry boss warns no-deal Brexit would cause 'serious damage' to the sector

The number of cars built in Britain dropped for the ninth consecutive month in February, new figures show. Around 123,200 cars were built last month, marking a fall of over 15 per cent from the same point a year ago. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said the continued reduction should be a wake-up call to anyone who believes the industry could survive a no-deal Brexit without 'serious damage.'

<https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/cars/article-6856749/Car-industry-boss-warns-no-deal-Brexit-cause-damage-sector.html>

Brexit: Business chief's attack on 'irresponsible' MPs - 'you've let us down'

Politicians have "let down" British business with their "irresponsible" handling of Brexit - a top business leader has said. Dr Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce said Parliament had spent three years "going round in circles". The deadlock had left companies and communities facing "mass disruption" and people were "angry and frustrated" at Westminster. In a speech to the BCC's annual conference in London, he will accuse politicians of focusing on "soundbites not substance" and of "listening without hearing".

https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/brexit-business-chiefs-attack-irresponsible-14196789?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=sharebar

A no-deal Brexit would send sterling to its lowest level since 1985

Regardless of what they tell you, traders struggle to explain short-term fluctuations in the value of currencies. Recently, however, the pound has become an exception. Every time it seems more likely that Britain will leave the EU without a deal, sterling falls against the dollar. The strength of this link can be measured statistically, thanks to a helpful proxy for the odds of no-deal. On January 16th a market opened on Betfair Exchange, a betting website, on whether Britain will crash out by March 29th, the original Brexit deadline. Punters have bet £3.9m (\$5.1m).

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/03/28/a-no-deal-brexit-would-send-sterling-to-its-lowest-level-since-1985>

Sterling tumbles as opposition to Brexit deal grows

Sterling fell almost 1% today as concerns grew that British Prime Minister Theresa May's offer to resign failed to convince hardline eurosceptics in her party to back her Brexit withdrawal deal. Boris Johnson, who led the 2016 referendum campaign to leave the European Union, said May's deal - already defeated twice in parliament - is now dead, London's Evening Standard newspaper reported today. Another Conservative Party lawmaker, Mark Francois, denounced May's EU divorce deal as "rancid" and said he would reject it again if parliament voted on it again. The pound tumbled by close to 1% to \$1.3061 this evening. Against the euro, it weakened 0.9% to 85.99 pence.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2019/0328/1039101-sterling-brexit-updates/>

Has poverty increased in the UK in the past year, did wages increase and how is Brexit involved?

A report by Cambridge Econometrics published in September 2018 assessed the various impacts Brexit could have on low-income groups in the years up to 2030. It found that consumer prices will probably rise and wages for low-pay workers will be "depressed". And in the case of a No Deal Brexit, low-income households could see an average £480 increase in the cost of living. In November 2018, a UN poverty expert blasted the UK Government's policies of public spending cuts and austerity ahead of Brexit. Philip Alston said: "The United Kingdom's impending exit from the European Union poses particular risks for people in poverty, but the Government appears to be treating this as an afterthought."

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8743480/poverty-increased-wages-uk-brexit/>

Administrative Fall Out

200,000 nurses have quit the NHS since 2010

Research conducted by the Labour Party and verified by the House of Commons Library shows that between 2010 and 2018 over 200,000 nurses left the NHS with a staggering 163,094 leaving for reasons 'other than retirement'. Meanwhile, the number of workers who quit for health reasons has doubled and the total number of staff leaving the NHS due to a poor work-life balance has more than tripled.

<https://nursingnotes.co.uk/200000-nurses-have-quit-the-nhs-since-2010/>

Scots cite Brexit as 'single most important issue' when considering independence

Brexit is now the most important issue for Scots when considering if the country should be independent, according to a new opinion poll. More than two-fifths (43%) of voters cited this as one of the three key issues they would consider when deciding if Scotland should be independent – just ahead of the 42% who said the economy was the most pressing factor. In 2014, the year of the independence referendum, the future of the economy was given as the main concern by 46% of voters, with EU membership only ranking as the sixth most important issue.

<https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/national/17535154.scots-cite-brexit-as-single-most-important-issue-when-considering-independence/>

Scots urged not to stockpile medication in run-up to Brexit

Scotland's chief medical officer has warned shortages of medicines "may occur" in the wake of a no-deal Brexit but said people should not stockpile drugs. Dr Catherine Calderwood said members of the public – as well as GPs, pharmacies and hospitals – should not try to build up their own supply of medication. She issued the advice in a letter sent to NHS board chief executives, local authority leaders and the leaders of integration authorities – which bring health and care services together.

<https://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/national/17534516.scots-urged-not-to-stockpile-medication-in-run-up-to-brexit/>

Brexit: No-deal advocates 'peddling myths'

Politicians advocating a no-deal Brexit are "peddling myths and misleading the public", the vice-chair of the NI Food and Drink Association (NIFDA) has said. Declan Billington said there is "no good outcome" from a no-deal scenario. Mr Billington attacked Conservative Brexiteers in Westminster, some of whom have said they will not back a deal and would prefer to leave the EU on World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms. "To find that so close to a no deal, the myths are still being peddled is hugely concerning because they're trying to sleepwalk us into a disaster for our local economy. "That's what we see coming out of the London politicians," he told BBC Newsline.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47736064>

Brexit police unit 'heavily deployed' since launch

A team of more than 300 police officers set up for incidents relating to Brexit has been "very heavily deployed and busy" since it started last week, Police Scotland has revealed. The dedicated unit for Brexit-related emergencies has already been dispatched to deal with protests and "increasing febrile" behaviour in the streets, according to Police Scotland Deputy Chief Constable Will Kerr. Funding for the additional officers is a source of concern, with the force's budget revealed to be facing a large shortfall.

<https://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/national/17534656.brexit-police-unit-heavily-deployed-since-launch/>

Brexit uncertainty stalls housing starts at 165,000 a year

Housing starts stagnated at 165,160 in 2018, despite Government efforts to pump up housing supply to achieve its flaunted building target of 300,000 homes by the mid-2020s.

<http://www.constructionenquirer.com/2019/03/28/brexit-uncertainty-stalls-housing-starts-at-165000-a-year/>

PSNI chief fears losing European arrest warrant in event of no-deal Brexit

A senior police officer has voiced concern that the European Arrest Warrant could disappear in the event of a no-deal Brexit. PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs told a Policing Board seminar in Belfast that this week alone, five people are being brought back to Northern Ireland under the policing tool. Making a presentation called Policing The EU Exit, Mr Mairs said police are concerned about the risk of losing this power if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. He also outlined potential risks from a no-deal Brexit including additional infrastructure or checks at the Irish border generating violent attacks and the exploitation of differences between the north and the Republic. He emphasised that police do not want to see the perception of a "safe haven" for criminals created

either north or south of the border after Brexit.

<https://www.irishnews.com/news/brexit/2019/03/28/news/police-chief-fears-losing-european-arrest-warrant-in-event-of-no-deal-brexit-1585700/>

Coffee industry 'crisis' looms due to fears of post-Brexit barista shortage

According to the UK Coffee Report, created by Allegra World Coffee in partnership with The London Coffee Festival, 6,517 new coffee shops are expected to crop up nationwide by 2023, which could lead to a shortage of baristas. There are currently 160,000 baristas working in the UK, but the research claims that 40,000 more will be needed to accommodate the looming surge of coffee shops. Given that the industry relies heavily on overseas workers, the report suggests that Brexit could have an adverse affect on yet another key part of our lives.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/coffee-industry-brexit-barista-shortage-cafe-eu-workers-right-stay-a8843511.html>

Scottish firms lack contingency plans for no-deal Brexit

More than half of Scottish businesses reliant on European Union funding do not have a no-deal Brexit contingency plan, new research indicates, as the UK's departure date looms amid a political stalemate and ongoing delays. A report by law firm Anderson Strathern found that just 45 per cent of Scots firms that receive funds from the EU have a full strategy in place

<https://www.scotsman.com/business/companies/scottish-firms-lack-contingency-plans-for-no-deal-brexit-1-4897643>

Britain can keep its meat affordable after Brexit, but will need to eat totally differently

Ed Barker, who represents the National Pig Association, said to i: "We buy a relatively small range of pig meat products. We only use certain parts of the animal and the surplus is exported. "Here, we eat lots of loin meat, used for bacon, and legs, which are used for cooked ham and gammon. We sell lots of belly, shoulder, and offal. The offal market here is virtually non-existent, even with chefs and restaurants talking about it. "Brexit could impact this and lead to a higher cost of production. Trade could become more expensive, which will lead to higher costs for consumers. The carcass balance we have, basically, would be fractured - meat in demand would go up in price and cheaper cuts would become cheaper, or, worse, wasted. "We actually have enough pigs to be self-sufficient, but only if British habits change radically. We over-consume some cuts and under-consume others. "In a no-deal Brexit, bacon might end up being 5-6 per cent higher in price. Retailers won't absorb that."

<https://inews.co.uk/news/brexit/britain-brexit-chicken-pork-carcass-balance-price-rises-white-dark-meat/>

Brexit 'risks German-Scots investment'

German companies could pull investment out of Scotland if post-Brexit trade becomes too difficult, a leading industry group has said. The risk was highlighted by Alexander Altmann, from the British Chambers of Commerce in Germany. German companies such as manufacturer Siemens and supermarket Lidl employ thousands of people in Scotland. German business leaders have come to Scotland to press the case for the UK to maintain free trade after Brexit. Mr Altmann told BBC Radio's Good Morning Scotland programme that most German companies wanted to see the UK stay in the customs union, which would mean no taxes on goods moved between EU countries and the UK.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-47730413>

If the Erasmus scheme closes after Brexit, how else can I study abroad?

For many students, a jaunt abroad is the highlight of their time at university. But political uncertainty caused by Brexit means more than 17,000 British students who planned to study in Europe with Erasmus+ from September have been left in limbo. This is because a technical note, published by the government at the end of January, failed to guarantee funding for the scheme if Britain leaves the EU without a deal. It would be a huge loss. Jane Racz, director of Erasmus+ at the British Council, says the scheme gives students a chance to gain language skills, to understand

different cultures and to build confidence. But there are other options. We run through some of the affordable alternatives to Erasmus+ for those who fear they could miss out.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/28/if-the-erasmus-scheme-closes-after-brexit-how-else-can-i-study-abroad>

Calais port ready for Brexit 'whenever it happens'

The Port of Calais is ready for Brexit "whenever it happens" after spending millions of pounds preparing for the UK to leave Europe without a deal. Jean-Marc Puisseuseau, the port's boss, told Sky News that he had overseen €6m of work designed to prepare the port for Brexit, and claimed that if the plans were followed "there should be no more delays after Brexit than there were before". His words are in stark contrast to many analysts in France, Britain and beyond who have claimed that Brexit, and particularly a no-deal Brexit, would lead to long delays at Calais as lorry drivers were subject to more onerous customs checks.

<https://news.sky.com/story/calais-port-ready-for-brexit-when-ever-it-happens-11676908>

Brexit has ganged up with Alzheimer's against my mother

It's tempting to think that the sudden deterioration of my mother's mental health could be linked to Brexit and our country's collective nervous breakdown. I know it's just a coincidence. But I believe that she and many others with Alzheimer's disease are Brexit victims because the government's focus on leaving the EU has created a policy vacuum that has cut adrift the most vulnerable people.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/28/brexit-alzheimers-mother-politics-social-care>

Brexit leaves Tate scrambling to assure EU museums over Van Gogh loans

It has now emerged that the opening this week of Van Gogh and Britain, the gallery's spring blockbuster, went ahead only after a last-minute diplomatic scramble to assure European galleries that any masterpieces loaned to the exhibition would not get stuck in a chaotic post-Brexit UK. The British and Dutch governments were both enlisted to assure lenders that their works would not be subject to hefty import taxes when they returned to the EU if Britain crashed out with no deal, the Guardian has learned. The Tate show was also specifically raised among European member states as a problem that needed an urgent resolution, before the European commission circulated new guidance on customs rules – barely a fortnight before the exhibition opened – to settle nerves.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/28/brexit-leaves-tate-scrambling-to-assure-eu-museums-over-van-gogh-loans>

Brexit: Firms tell MPs to 'stop chasing rainbows'

MPs need to stop "chasing rainbows" when it comes to resolving the Brexit impasse, according to the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC). Brexit uncertainty is already doing "real world damage" to the UK economy, the BCC's Adam Marshall told the group's annual conference on Thursday. He also said leaving the European Union in a disorderly way would be a "flagrant dereliction of duty".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47721655>

Political Shenanigans

MPs to vote on 'substantially different' Withdrawal Agreement on Friday

Speaker John Bercow on Thursday cleared the Government's Brexit motion on the EU Withdrawal Agreement for debate, ruling that it complies with parliamentary conventions which bar ministers from asking MPs to vote repeatedly on the same proposals. He said the motion "complies with the test" because it is "new and substantially different". The motion will not count as a third attempt to pass a "meaningful vote" on Mrs May's deal because it will not cover the future relationship with Europe. MPs will be voting on the Withdrawal Agreement only, which argues the terms of actually leaving the EU, including terms on future trade and the Irish backstop, and not the Political Declaration which sets out plans for a future trade and security relationship with the EU.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-03-28/mps-to-vote-on-new-and-substantially-different-withdrawal-agreement-on-friday/>

Theresa May warned promise to fall on sword may not be enough to pass Brexit deal

Theresa May has been warned her promise to stand down if her Brexit deal goes through will not be enough to win over hardline Tory Eurosceptics. The Prime Minister sounded the death knell on her premiership by telling Tory MPs she would stand down for the next phase of negotiations with Brussels. She is currently battling to win round DUP allies in a desperate attempt to save her Brexit deal.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-03-28/may-warned-promise-to-fall-on-sword-may-not-be-enough-to-pass-brexit-deal/>

The European Union Thinks The UK Is Left With Two Choices After The Last 24 Hours Of Brexit Chaos

BuzzFeed News has seen a diplomatic note of an EU27 ambassadors meeting on Thursday that states that the UK's remaining options are no-deal or a long delay to Brexit.

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/albertonardelli/eu-uk-brexit-choices-no-deal-delay>

EU moves into crisis mode as it plans for no-deal Brexit

The EU has moved into full crisis mode, with officials now setting the terms the UK will have to meet for Brussels to open talks on avoiding an economic meltdown in the weeks after a no-deal Brexit. The EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, told the diplomats during the meeting that a no deal was now "the most plausible outcome", and that there was an urgent need to war-game the bloc's response to it. The EU is to step up its "full-on crisis" preparations, according to a diplomatic note. It was agreed among the member states that for there to be any talks after the UK has crashed out, the bloc's 27 capitals will expect Downing Street to agree to signal by 18 April that it will pay the £39bn Brexit bill despite the failure of the Commons to ratify the withdrawal agreement.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/28/eu-discusses-terms-for-talks-after-no-deal-brexit>

The DUP faced down the IRA - they aren't going to crumble before Theresa May

EU officials involved in negotiating the Northern Ireland backstop admitted afterwards that they couldn't believe the British had signed up to it. "We knew it would not be acceptable to the unionists," one said. Months on, that message still seems to be struggling to get through in Westminster. Is it really so hard to understand why those whose entire existence is founded on preserving the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland would stand firm against a proposal which, in their eyes, fatally threatens it?

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/03/28/dup-faced-ira-arent-going-crumble-theresa-may/>

In this leadership race, the future of Conservatism is up for grabs

If Boris Johnson was even half as egotistical and calculating as his enemies say, things might not be in such a mess now. Had he not collapsed in a heap immediately after the referendum and slunk off to play cricket at Althorp, without anything resembling a leadership campaign, he might have won. Instead Theresa May, fresh from having sat out the referendum campaign, saw her chance and pounced. Mr Johnson failed to become leader because of a lack of basic organisation. This is not a mistake that anyone now eyeing No 10 intends to repeat. Now that Mrs May has offered to resign if her deal is voted through (and it might be tomorrow) the battle to succeed her has begun.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/03/28/leadership-race-future-conservatism-grabs/>

Securing a Brexit deal will not end the UK's political crisis

Wednesday night's indicative votes showed that there is, so far, a majority for none of the alternatives on offer. But the most popular option, involving a softer Brexit customs union, could find its way into the post-May round of trade negotiations with the EU. In fact, May's original withdrawal agreement does not rule out a softer Brexit -- because it is concerned with the process of leaving

rather than the nature of a future relationship. Intriguingly, the DUP abstained on the customs union motion, rather than voted against. They are rumored to be inclined towards a softer Brexit than May has argued for -- the bigger issue for them is the integrity of the UK and the Northern Irish backstop. What could change the metrics is, of course, a general election.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/28/uk/brexit-turmoil-ongoing-intl-gbr/index.html>

SNP accused of 'faux outrage' over Brexit

Nicola Sturgeon is more interested in pushing for independence than she is in finding a solution to Brexit, the Scottish Conservatives have claimed. All 35 SNP MPs abstained in a Commons vote on whether there should be customs union with the EU after Brexit. Tory interim leader Jackson Carlaw said the SNP had "refused to back the very option they have been demanding" and accused Ms Sturgeon of "faux outrage". Ms Sturgeon said remaining in the EU must now be the top priority. And she said her party would continue to "stand up for Scotland's interests" by pushing for another referendum on EU membership.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-47736303>

Brexit consensus still possible after Commons deadlock, says Letwin

The Conservative MP behind a series of indicative votes in the Commons has insisted the process could still find a consensus despite Wednesday night's first attempt ending in deadlock, saying a final collapse of Theresa May's deal would focus minds. Eight votes on alternative Brexit options, put before the Commons after MPs seized control of the parliamentary process from the government, resulted in no majority for any of them, although the vote was close on one softer Brexit option. Oliver Letwin, the Tory former minister whose amendment created the process, said this was to be expected, and that if May's deal is defeated for a third time if put to MPs on Friday, this could forge unity if the only other option was no deal on 12 April.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/28/brexit-consensus-still-possible-after-commons-deadlock-says-letwin>

Brexit: Labour vows to oppose any 'desperate' bid by Theresa May to split vote on EU deal

Labour will oppose any "desperate" attempt by Theresa May to split a crucial vote on her Brexit deal in two, Sir Keir Starmer has said. The shadow Brexit secretary's remarks came amid speculation MPs could be asked to approve the Brexit withdrawal agreement, but not the political declaration setting out plans for a future trade and security relationship with the EU. Sir Keir said such a move would amount to asking MPs to vote for a "blindfold" approach to the next phase of talks - which could be led by a different prime minister.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-labour-vote-keir-starmer-corbyn-theresa-may-deal-eu-a8843791.html>

Brexit: Limbo remains despite Theresa May's grand gesture

The prime minister offered to pay the ultimate political price, and leave office - the grandest of gestures any leader ever really has. For a moment it seemed it might work and line up the support she so desperately needs. But within a couple of hours her allies in Northern Ireland were refusing to unblock the progress of Theresa May's main mission. That might not be terminal - one cabinet minister told me the PM may yet have another go at pushing her deal through Parliament against the odds on Friday. But if Plan A fails, Parliament is not ready with a clear Plan B that could yet succeed.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47728949>

May to Put Divorce Deal Only to Vote on Friday: Brexit Update

Theresa May will put her Brexit divorce deal to a vote in Parliament on Friday, but she's holding back the part of the package that focuses on the future trade and security relationship. The question is

whether the British prime minister will win the vote this time, after her deal was rejected overwhelmingly on two previous occasions. She's been trying to woo the Democratic Unionist Party in talks all day.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-28/may-s-options-narrow-as-deal-hinges-on-dup-allies-brex-it-update?utm_source=twitter&utm_content=brexit&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&cmpid%3D=socialflow-facebook-brexit

Softer Brexit now possible, not DUP's priority - deputy leader

The deputy leader of the Northern Irish party propping up Prime Minister Theresa May's government said a Brexit outcome that keeps the United Kingdom more closely aligned to the European Union is now a possibility. "From our point of view, the concern and priority for us and Northern Ireland isn't necessarily the form of Brexit," Nigel Dodds, whose party will not back May in Friday's third attempt to pass her divorce deal in parliament, told BBC Northern Ireland. "It's making sure that whatever form of Brexit we have, that those trade barriers between ourselves and our main market in the rest of the United Kingdom, the constitutional issues, that those are protected and we will be seeking a stronger role in the second stage (of talks) to avoid some of the problems we have faced in the first stage."

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-dup-dodds-idUKKCN1R92VS>

@Peston The motion for MPs tomorrow "approves Withdrawal Agreement" if passed - but weirdly does not represent a meaningful vote on Brexit. It would lock in 22 May as Brexit day, rather than 12 April.

The motion for MPs tomorrow "approves Withdrawal Agreement" if passed - but weirdly does not represent a meaningful vote on Brexit. It would lock in 22 May as Brexit day, rather than 12 April. But is hugely confusing - because unless and until the EU Withdrawal Act is reformed...

<https://twitter.com/Peston/status/1111314646357692416>

Brexit vote: Another defeat ahead for May?

On what was meant to be Brexit Day, is a request to MPs to allow her to keep going, to carry on pursuing her route, with its well-documented flaws. There's a challenge there too, not just to her own Brexiteers but to Labour and the other opposition parties, to say "no" to a long delay to our departure from the EU, the last moment when Number 10 believes anything even approaching a timely exit can be guaranteed. There are signs now of course that many Eurosceptic MPs are ready to say "yes" - not because they suddenly have realised her deal is perfect but because more of them officially realise that it is the clearest break from the EU they can realistically hope for. Yet her Northern Irish allies are not persuaded. Labour, even though they have sometimes accepted that what's on the table tomorrow, the divorce deal, will never be unpicked by the EU, will still, in the main, resist.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47742243>

How the UK lost Brexit battle

In the short five-paragraph document written by Council President Donald Tusk's chief of staff, Piotr Serafin, and circulated among EU ambassadors, the bloc's remaining 27 national governments were urged to speak with one voice and to insist that the U.K. leave through the Article 50 process set down in EU law. This meant settling the divorce first and the future relationship second, once the U.K. had left. "In the future we hope to have the U.K. as a close partner of the EU," the document read. "First we need to agree the arrangements for the withdrawal."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/how-uk-lost-brexit-eu-negotiation/>

Political Setbacks

Sky Data poll: Almost half of Britons unconvinced by Theresa May's potential

replacements

Almost half of the British public are unconvinced by the likely candidates to succeed Theresa May as prime minister, according to an exclusive Sky Data poll. But the vast majority want her to resign if parliament votes against her Brexit deal for a third time.

<https://news.sky.com/story/sky-data-poll-almost-half-of-britons-unconvinced-by-theresa-mays-potential-replacements-11677361>

Labour Chairman Ian Lavery 'Backed Managed No-Deal Brexit By Mistake'

Labour chairman Ian Lavery is facing calls to apologise to the party's pro-EU membership after claiming he mistakenly voted in favour of a managed no-deal Brexit. The Wansbeck MP has admitted he accidentally rebelled against the Labour whip when the Commons was asked to vote on eight different Brexit motions as part of the 'indicative votes' process in the Commons on Wednesday night. MPs were presented with 'Yes/No' ballots for each of the options as they attempted reach a consensus on exiting the bloc in the wake of two defeats for Theresa May's deal. Lavery backed a motion by hardline Tory Brexiteer Marcus Fysh for a managed no-deal exit. It advocated a "standstill" agreement with the EU while a Canada-style free trade deal, without a single market or customs union agreement, was reached.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/labour-chairman-ian-lavery-claims-he-mistakenly-voted-for-no-deal-brexit_uk_5c9cdda7e4b072a7f606420d

EXCL Theresa May spent thousands on Facebook ads promoting her speech attacking MPs

The Government paid between £12,000 and £30,000 for four Facebook ads pushing the controversial speech she made from Downing Street a week ago. The cost was part of an expensive publicity blitz Downing Street embarked on in a desperate bid to promote the Brexit deal Mrs May clinched with Brussels, according to a new analysis by the People's Vote campaign. Ministers spent between £80,000 and £300,000 on Facebook ads promoting the Brexit deal, including the four that featured a video of Mrs May's address. But the ads have since been switched to 'inactive' - suggesting the PM had second thoughts about pumping them through Facebook to Brits around the country. Some £700,000 has been spent since mid-December last year by the Cabinet Office on two agencies - Manning Gottlieb OMD and Engine Partners UK - to push Brexit content from the Government.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/theresa-may/news/102827/excl-theresa-may-spent>

In a Bid to 'Take Back Control,' Britain Lost It

More than 1,000 days after the U.K. voted to leave the EU, the country's future is still shrouded in uncertainty. Its exit date from the bloc is still unknown. Its parliament is hopelessly divided. Who will be leading the country in the weeks and months ahead is no longer clear. No one, least of all British lawmakers, seems to know how Brexit will happen, or even whether it will happen at all. Nearly every political figure or institution of note in London—including Prime Minister Theresa May, who has lost control of Brexit to both her party's right wing and to Parliament, and the House of Commons itself, which has not been able to agree on any single option for leaving the EU—has, when seeking to exert control, proved to have none.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/03/brexit-britain-control-may-eu/585940/>

Brexit was scheduled for March 29th. Wasn't it meant to be easy?

"There will be no downside to Brexit, only a considerable upside." David Davis, the first of three (and counting) Brexit secretaries, lays out his analysis. October 10th 2016

<https://www.economist.com/britain/2019/03/30/brexit-was-scheduled-for-march-29th-wasnt-it-meant-to-be-easy>

Brexit is a national crisis. Not a careers fair for 22 Tories

Hanging over all of this is the sense that who gets to be prime minister of Britain is a private matter for the top of the Tory party; that a national crisis should somehow be a careers fair for 22 people. You can put some of that down to Cameron's law for fixed-term parliaments, but there is also the thick, sweaty air of entitlement.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/28/brexit-national-crisis-careers-tories-theresa-may>

'No way to run a country': Business frustration with Brexit chaos boils over

Business leaders are voicing intense frustration with politicians who have plunged the United Kingdom deeper into uncertainty over Brexit. "No one would run a business like this — and it is no way to run a country," Adam Marshall, head of the British Chambers of Commerce, said on Thursday. Theresa May has offered to step down as prime minister in a last-ditch effort to win support for her EU divorce plan, which UK lawmakers have already rejected twice by huge margins. Parliament itself has now seized more control over the process. Yet with only two weeks to go before the exit deadline — delayed once already — a series of votes on alternative scenarios has provided little clarity.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/28/business/business-response-brexit/index.html>

UK PM's May's Brexit deal is 'rancid' - Conservative lawmaker Francois

Brexit-supporting Conservative Party lawmaker Mark Francois said on Thursday that Prime Minister Theresa May's European Union divorce deal was "rancid" and that he would vote against it again. "If it comes back I'm happy to vote it down again," he told Sky News. "The British people voted to leave the European Union - let's just leave," said Francois, who is vice-chairman of the European Research Group of pro-Brexit Conservative lawmakers.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-francois/uk-pms-mays-brexit-deal-is-rancid-conservative-lawmaker-francois-idUKKCN1R90WU>

Brexit: Guy Verhofstadt mocks Nigel Farage at European Parliament, comparing him to Blackadder character

However, none of the comebacks were as on point or as savage as this takedown from the EU's Brexit coordinator who compared him to Field Marshal Haig from Blackadder.

<https://www.indy100.com/article/brexit-nigel-farage-guy-verhofstadt-blackadder-haig-eu-parliament-8843316>

Arlene Foster: PM's Brexit deal 'would damage the union'

The DUP has confirmed it will not back Theresa May's Brexit deal despite the prime minister's promise to step down if MPs supported it. DUP leader Arlene Foster said that the party "cannot sign up to something that would damage the union".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-northern-ireland-47728828/arlene-foster-pm-s-brexit-deal-would-damage-the-union>

Meet the man 'detained at Gatwick for wearing an anti-Brexit badge'

A man wearing an anti-EU badge was challenged by a customs officer to remove the badge, when he refused, he was briefly placed in a room for questioning until a second officer released him. Home Office said it is now investigating

<https://www.euronews.com/2019/03/28/meet-the-man-detained-at-gatwick-for-wearing-an-anti-brexit-badge>

Revoke Article 50 petition to cancel Brexit hits 6million signatures

A petition to Revoke Article 50 has now been signed by more than six million people. Today EU Council President Donald Tusk said the six million people who have so far supported it must be listened to. MPs will discuss the poll in Westminster Hall, a secondary chamber, on 1 April after a record number of people signed it. But the government have already said they won't be revoking Article 50. In an official response posted on the parliamentary petitions website, the Government said: "This Government will not revoke Article 50. We will honour the result of the 2016 referendum

and work with Parliament to deliver a deal that ensures we leave the European Union."

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/revoke-article-50-petition-cancel-14194860>

Brexit Britain: A nation born from Tory playground politics - leader comment

Theresa May offers to quit, making Boris Johnson smile in latest outbreak of playground politics over Brexit. Boris Johnson emerged from last night's meeting of Conservative MPs with a broad smile. Then came the news that Theresa May had promised to stand down if they agreed to vote for her Brexit deal – and that Johnson and other hardline Tory Brexiteers were now prepared to back it

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/brexit-britain-a-nation-born-from-tory-playground-politics-leader-comment-1-4897142>

Theresa May faces her day of reckoning on Brexit - and is warned it will not end well

Theresa May will face a day of reckoning on Friday as she tables one last vote on her Brexit deal despite warnings from her closest aides and ministers that she is destined for yet another defeat. The Prime Minister has promised to resign if she gets a deal through Parliament, but Eurosceptic MPs have insisted she must announce the timetable of her departure on Friday regardless

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/03/28/brexit-latest-news-theresa-mays-promise-stand-fails-move-dup/>

Brexit: Several million reasons to hold second referendum

Whatever the estimated numbers turn out to be, no one can deny that last weekend's demonstration in London was an impressive expression of people's desire to move to a second referendum to settle the Brexit debacle. As the UK Parliament continues to tie itself in knots with ever-increasing tedium

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/opinion/brexit-several-million-reasons-to-hold-second-referendum-st-eve-cardownie-1-4896155>

Government 'never met' Seaborne Freight's financial backers

The Department for Transport (DfT) held no face-to-face meetings with the backers of the ferry-less shipping firm Seaborne Freight, the BBC has learned. A Freedom of Information request unveiled that no officials or ministers met Arklow Shipping, the Irish firm that eventually withdrew its support for a route between Kent and Belgium. It also uncovered that no DfT ministers met Seaborne at any point. But the government stressed that many emails and phone calls were exchanged.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47726977>

Theresa May's deal may not be dead, but it's killing us

Any journalist who tells you they did not enjoy any of this is probably lying. Brexit may be bad for a lot of industries but it has certainly been good for journalism — or at least for providing its practitioners with new material, even if its consumers take a dimmer view of it than ever. But it now feels as though even that cold comfort is ebbing away. The rot set in back in December when Mrs May cancelled what was meant to be the first meaningful vote. Robbed of that crunch point, MPs sought catharsis through other means: first, the failed no-confidence vote in the prime minister brought by her own colleagues and second, the failed no-confidence vote brought in by Labour. It established a pattern which has persisted from that day to this, dictated by Section 13 of the EU Withdrawal Act, the bit that makes any withdrawal agreement subject to approval by MPs in a "meaningful vote".

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/theresa-may-s-deal-may-not-be-dead-but-it-s-killing-us-w2v2mldg0>

Brexit: Theresa May's last gamble in tatters as resignation plan is not enough

Theresa May played her final card tonight telling febrile Tory MPs that she will quit if they finally back her Brexit deal. An emotional Prime Minister told a packed meeting she will go before the next stage of talks - but only if her twice-defeated ...

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/brexit-theresa-mays-last-gamble-14196103>

Brexit: May vows to resign before next phase of negotiations if deal is passed

Theresa May has played her final desperate card to tame the Brexit rebels in her warring party, by promising to sacrifice her premiership if they back her twice-rejected Brexit deal. The beleaguered prime minister, whose authority has been shattered by the double rejection of her deal and the humiliation of a delay to Brexit day, made the offer to Tory backbenchers at a packed meeting in parliament. It came as MPs held backbench-led "indicative votes" on eight alternative Brexit options, including no deal, a referendum, a customs union and a Norway-style deal – none of which secured a majority.

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/27/theresa-may-to-resign-before-next-phase-of-brexit?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Tweet

Brexit deal split deeply risky move for Theresa May as MPs smell a trap

Stripping out the part of the deal that outlines what future relationship we will seek with the EU will annoy Labour MPs, who are already angry about not knowing what type of Brexit lies ahead due to the vague nature of the political declaration. No doubt, the government will seek to reassure MPs by promising to bring back another full vote on the whole Brexit deal in the coming weeks, giving them a chance to take blocking action. But some MPs smell a trap. It is UK law that dictates that both parts of Mrs May's deal need to be passed before Brexit. Could the government seek to change the law and then attempt to leave the EU on the basis of tomorrow's vote?

<https://news.sky.com/story/brexit-deal-split-deeply-risky-move-for-theresa-may-as-mps-smell-a-trap-11677579>

Blow for Jeremy Corbyn as Labour frontbencher quits to join rebellion against second Brexit referendum

A Labour frontbencher quit her job last night to join a major rebellion against the party's backing for a second Brexit referendum. Melanie Onn resigned as a shadow housing minister after Labour ordered its MPs to vote in favour of a motion calling for any Brexit deal passed by the Commons to be put to a public vote. Jeremy Corbyn suffered further embarrassment when three Shadow Cabinet members - Jon Trickett, Ian Lavery and Andrew Gwynne - abstained.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/labour-party/jeremy-corbyn/news/102851/blow-jeremy-corbyn-labour>

We're led by a party not fit for power in a system not fit for purpose

But even if the Conservatives were decent and effective, as a simple matter of capacity they are no longer even low-functioning – they are not viable. Terrified of their own members and overwhelmed with internal rivalry, they cannot run themselves let alone the country. Their divisions are multiple and irreconcilable. (True, many say the same about Labour. But there are two important distinctions: Labour did not get us into this mess; and it has a far more plausible plan to get us out of it.)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/28/tory-party-brexit-political-system-second-referendum>

The President of the Royal Society explains why he signed the Revoke Article 50 petition

Amidst the political chaos, it is astonishing that the idea of a 'no-deal' Brexit is still touted as a viable alternative by some politicians. Parliament has voted against it, employers and unions have said it will cost jobs and be hugely disruptive, yet somehow the idea persists. The uncertainty and disruption caused by a 'no-deal' Brexit would be disastrous for UK science.

http://www.scientistsforeu.uk/royal_society_president_article50petition

Donald Tusk: EU cannot betray increasing majority wishing to remain - video

Donald Tusk has said the EU cannot betray an 'increasing majority' of British people who want to cancel Brexit and remain in the bloc. The European council president hailed those who marched on the streets of London and the millions who were petitioning the government to revoke article 50. Tusk finished his speech by saying: 'They may feel that they are not sufficiently represented by the UK parliament, but they must feel that they are represented by you in this chamber. Because they

are Europeans'

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2019/mar/27/donald-tusk-eu-cannot-betray-increasing-majority-wishing-re-main-brex-it-video>

Police brace for disorder after far-right protesters threaten to riot on what would have been Brexit day

Police are bracing for potential unrest at protests by pro-Brexit groups following threats of riots by far-right extremists. Scotland Yard said it was ready to "share resource across the country" if disorder breaks out at numerous planned demonstrations in London and across the UK on Friday. Ukip, Tommy Robinson, the UK "yellow vests", Democratic Football Lads Alliance and Leave Means Leave campaign are holding rallies in the capital, on the day Britain was due to leave the EU. Counter-protesters are planning to meet them after accusing anti-Islam groups of using Brexit as a "platform to spread their extreme far-right agenda". The Metropolitan Police is working to prevent clashes at the demonstrations, which will be held amid heightened tensions over a vote on Theresa May's Brexit deal in the House of Commons.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/police-brex-it-riot-violence-far-right-tommy-robinson-leave-ukip-e-u-met-scotland-yard-a8844181.html>

Trade Deals/Negotiations

Brexit: Rolled-over UK free trade deals 'are incomplete'

At a Conservative party event in 2017, Liam Fox said: "We're going to replicate the 40 EU free trade agreements that exist before we leave the European Union, so we've got no disruption of trade. "Believe me, we'll have up to 40 ready for one second after midnight in March 2019," the international trade secretary added. As of 28 March, only eight of the 40 have been signed.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47739303>