

# News from the Brexit Cliff Edge

## 2nd May 2019

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### News Highlights

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## Welcome to the Brexit Cliff Edge

### UK factory exports tumble as Brexit chaos takes toll

- [UK manufacturing exports declined](#) at the second fastest rate in four and a half years in April, amid a slowdown in factory output, figures from IHS Markit and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) show

### Brexit drains \$30bn from UK funds

- [Investment funds based in the UK haemorrhaged £30bn](#) in the 12 months up to the end of March, as Brexit uncertainty prompted investors to spurn UK assets and shift money to EU regulated products. Research by Morningstar indicated that funds domiciled in the UK lost £5bn in assets in March and £30bn across the course of the last twelve months

### Car Industry warns of a return to the 'dark days' as manufacturing falls again

- [UK car manufacturing fell for the tenth month in a row](#), as industry warned that output from the sector could fall back to 1980's levels in the event of a No Deal Brexit. The SMMT released a report which underpinned the gloom and concluded with the fact that car exports represent nearly four fifths of all UK car production, which demonstrates how critical the importance of free and frictionless trade is to the UK car manufacturing industry

### No Deal brexit ferry contracts to be scrapped at an eye-watering cost of £50m to the UK taxpayer

- [The UK government ended the](#) contracts for £89m worth of ferry capacity from Brittany Ferries and DFDS. Some of the capacity may be sold on, but millions of pounds look likely to be lost. The government has also been forced to pay £33m to Eurotunnel to settle a case in which the company challenged the procurement process for the ferry contracts. The DfT is also facing an additional legal action from P&O Ferries, which says its rival, Eurotunnel, was given an unfair competitive advantage by the government

### Fiona Onasanya is booted out as an MP, after her recall petition, over her recent conviction, met the voter recall threshold

- [The MP for Peterborough will be forced to stand down](#) as an MP and a by-election for the seat will be called. This is the second time ever a recall petition has been used by Parliament. It is the first time an MP has been recalled

### UKIP support melts away in its Kent heartland - Thanet

- [UKIP won Thanet on an anti-establishment platform last time around](#), a pledge which included plans to reopen Manston Airport, which never materialised. In the local elections later today, UKIP has

just three candidates for the 56 seats on Thanet Council. The local party's infrastructure has disappeared and candidates, supporters and activists have fled

### **Gavin Williamson - a man who leaked ambition**

- [Theresa May sacked her Defence Minister Gavin Williamson](#) over the handing of sensitive UK National Security Council papers to a journalist, putting national security at risk. Now, MPs are calling for a police investigation and Mr Williamson to step down and trigger a by-election

### **Are Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn about to give birth to a Brexit compromise deal?**

- [With the PM stating that her aim is to wrap up Brexit talks by the middle of next week](#), hints are emerging, from sources on both political sides of the discussion, that a compromise Brexit plan is close. Theresa May told a parliamentary committee on Wednesday that 'there is a greater commonality between ourselves and the official opposition,' going on to say 'can we come to an agreement on customs union? I hope we will be able to'
- [Rebecca Long-Bailey told BBC Radio4 Today programme](#) listeners that 'the Tories have no option but to shift their red lines if they want to get a Brexit deal through the Commons.' A Tory source said the key question was whether Corbyn and McDonnell are 'willing to dip their hands in the blood of Brexit' and risk a split with pro-EU colleagues

### **Corbyn's attempt to play the electorate over Brexit look to have backfired. Now neither side needs Labour to get to do what they want**

- [Grassroots supporters of Jeremy Corbyn](#) and his progressive campaign to reform the Labour Party are starting to think about 'life after Corbyn' now and many believe the recent NEC decision to reject grassroot calls for a Final Say referendum risks Corbyn alienating himself from the very members who ensured his victory

### **Theresa May is weighing up remaining in an EU customs union**

- [The FT reports the PM is considering keeping the UK inside the EU's tariff wall](#) to secure a Brexit deal, which would restrict the country's ability to do trade deals, but allow it to strike agreements on services around the world. The PM has been warned by the Chief Whip 'that unless she strikes a trade deal with Labour a second referendum becomes highly likely'

### **Tory Cabinet ministers are split over a customs union Brexit deal with Labour**

- [A senior Tory cabinet minister suggested](#) a deal involving a customs union could be backed by as few as 90 Tory MPs and that it would mean a slew of resignations from the government payroll. It would be opposed by the SNP, Lib Dems and other smaller parties - alongside dozens of Labour MPs who would only back a deal if it included a confirmatory referendum

### **Michael Gove tells the Cabinet it would be better to have an unpalatable deal with Labour than no Brexit at all**

- [Gove told cabinet colleagues it was time to give ground](#) in the Brexit cross-party talks so that a Brexit agreement can be reached. Gove went on to say an unpalatable deal would be better than the disastrous outcome of Brexit being shelved altogether

## **MPs in the UK's parliaments make history by passing a motion to declare an environmental and climate change emergency**

- [Leading the debate, Jeremy Corbyn said](#) 'there was no time to waste as the climate crisis looks set to spiral out of control unless we take rapid action to reverse it now.'
- [A Russian oligarch's wife paid £135,000 for dinner](#) with Theresa May and six female Cabinet ministers
- [Nearly 8m UK voters were said not be registered](#) to vote ahead of the European elections - according to a Best for Britain commissioned study
- [The Daily Mirror reported that 'Labour](#) is winning the ground war in the local elections as the Tories 'have gone missing'
- [The Brexit Party candidate Claire Fox](#) is coming under fire for her past views as a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Fox and her group publicly backed the IRA bombing Warrington in 1993, where two young boys were killed.

### **Economic Impact**

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#### **UK factory exports tumble as Brexit chaos takes toll**

Fears over the threat of a disorderly Brexit lost UK companies new orders from international clients last month as factory exports plunged, according to a survey. UK manufacturers' exports declined at the second-fastest rate in four and a half years in April, amid a slowdown in factory output, the figures from IHS Markit and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (Cips) show.

[https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/01/uk-factory-exports-tumble-as-brexit-chaos-takes-toll?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/01/uk-factory-exports-tumble-as-brexit-chaos-takes-toll?CMP=share_btn_tw)

#### **Brexit drains £30bn from UK funds**

Investment funds based in the UK haemorrhaged £30bn in the 12 months to the end of March, as Brexit uncertainty prompted investors to spurn UK assets and shift money to EU-regulated products. The UK came close to leaving the EU without a formal agreement on March 29. Although this possibility was ultimately precluded by an extension to the exit date, news of the delay came at the last minute. New research by Morningstar, a data provider, shows that funds domiciled in the UK were hit hard by the Brexit unease, losing £5bn in assets in March and £30bn in total over a 12-year period. Bhavik Parekh, associate analyst for manager research at Morningstar, said: "In the months leading to the deadline, investors and fund [managers] became increasingly worried over the impact of an unfavourable deal and its negative implications." The outflows were partly driven by investors culling their exposure to asset classes vulnerable to Brexit shocks, such as UK companies. UK equity income funds — a longstanding investor favourite — bled £3.1bn over the year to the end of March.

<https://www.ft.com/content/831c060c-6b52-11e9-a9a5-351eeaeef6d84>

#### **Trouble ahead for UK manufacturers as April PMI dips**

Stockpiling had been the key theme in UK manufacturing over recent months, as concerns rose about the possibility of an imminent 'no deal' Brexit. Recent PMI surveys had suggested that firms were building inventory at an unprecedented rate - faster in fact than any G7 economy has experienced in the survey's history. But now that Article 50 has been extended and the immediate risk of 'no deal' postponed, this stockpiling activity has eased slightly according to the latest survey data. This helped take the manufacturing PMI from 55.1 in March to 53.1 in April.

<https://think.ing.com/snaps/trouble-ahead-for-uk-manufacturers-as-april-pmi-dips/>

#### **The Irish Farmers Association says Brexit has so far cost beef farmers over €100m.**

The Irish Farmers Association says Brexit has so far cost beef farmers over €100m. They say price cuts brought on by Brexit have left many on the brink of going out of business. A protest to highlight their concerns is taking place outside a meeting of Cabinet in Cork later. IFA President Joe Healy says beef farmers are suffering and the Government needs to act like they said they would. "The

minister has adopted a wait and see approach and this government has said that they'd have farmers' backs in the case of Brexit - well know we want them to back up their words," said Mr Healy. "We don't have to wait and see. Farmers have endured the pain of Brexit in their pockets, where it really hurts." "Unless they're supported they'll go out of business."

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/brexit-has-cost-beef-farmers-over-100m-say-ifa-921215.html#.XMIDQLah1NI.twitter>

### **Car industry warns of return to 'dark days' as manufacturing falls again**

UK car manufacturing fell for the tenth month in the row in March as the industry warned that output from the sector could fall to 1980s levels in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The number of cars produced declined to 126,195, 14.4% lower than in the same period last year, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). It reported an 18.1% fall in vehicles produced for domestic use and a 13.4% downturn for overseas - the latter blamed on continued weaker demand in key Asian and European markets. But the SMMT added that exports represented nearly four-fifths of overall production, demonstrating the importance of free and frictionless trade.

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/money/news/car-industry-warns-of-return-to-dark-days-as-manufacturing-falls-again/ar-AAIT1W?ocid=spartandhp>

## **Political Setbacks**

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### **UK government cancels Brexit ferry deals**

The Department for Transport is cancelling contracts to provide extra ferry services after Brexit. Ending the contracts with Brittany Ferries and DFDS could cost the taxpayer more than £50m. The government bought £89m worth of capacity from the two firms. Some of that capacity might be sold, but millions of pounds could be lost. The contracts were designed to ease pressure on the port of Dover, by creating extra services at other ports. In February, the DfT was forced to axe its £13.8m contract with a third company, Seaborne Freight, which the BBC found had never sailed a vessel. Earlier this year, the National Audit Office estimated that the cancellation costs of all the ferry contracts would be £56.6m. The cost is likely to only be several million pounds less than this. A government spokesperson said: "The termination of these contracts has resulted in less cost to the taxpayer than the termination costs reported by the NAO." The government was also forced to pay £33m to Eurotunnel, to settle a case which challenged the procurement process for the ferry contracts. In addition, the DfT is now facing legal action from P&O Ferries, which says its rival, Eurotunnel, was given a competitive advantage by the government.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-48117366>

*Additional sources: ([Evening Standard](#)) ([Daily Telegraph](#)) ([Politics Home](#)) ([Sky News](#)) ([Huffington Post UK](#))*

### **Fiona Onasanya booted out as MP after recall petition over conviction**

Disgraced Fiona Onasanya has been booted out as an MP after her constituents voted to force a by-election. The Peterborough MP, who ousted Tory Stewart Jackson in 2017 on a majority of just 607, was jailed and expelled from the Labour Party after being convicted of perverting the course of justice. And rare recall petition - only the second ever of its kind - opened on March 19, giving voters a chance to boot her out. Speaker John Bercow confirmed today that the petition was signed by 10% of her constituents, that she was no longer the MP for Peterborough and a by-election would take place in the seat.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/breaking-fiona-onasanya-booted-out-14980878>

*Additional sources: ([Daily Telegraph](#))*

### **Jeremy Corbyn Rejects Claims That He Endorsed Anti-Semitism In Colonialism Textbook**

Jeremy Corbyn has rejected claims that he endorsed anti-semitic remarks in an academic textbook on colonialism, pointing out the language used was "of its time". The Labour leader was plunged into a fresh row over the issue after it emerged that he had praised the study by JA Hobson as "a

great tome". The book, *Imperialism: A Study*, included several anti-semitic tropes about Jewish control of media and finance. It included a line that claimed Europe was controlled "by men of a single and peculiar race, who have behind them many centuries of financial experience". The Jewish Labour Movement said the issue was a resignation matter for Corbyn, who wrote a foreword to a new edition of the textbook when he was a backbencher in 2011.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jeremy-corbyn-rejects-claims-that-he-endorsed-anti-semitism-in-history-book-on-colonialism\\_uk\\_5cc9c34de4b0e4d7572c995e](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jeremy-corbyn-rejects-claims-that-he-endorsed-anti-semitism-in-history-book-on-colonialism_uk_5cc9c34de4b0e4d7572c995e)

*Additional sources: (Politics Home) (The Guardian)*

### **UK local elections: Ukip support melts away in Kent heartland**

Thanet hoped to take back control. Four years ago, in its last local elections, the Kentish district delivered a populist shock by electing the first council run by the UK Independence party. The party that championed Brexit decades before the term was coined won Thanet on an anti-establishment platform, including a pledge to reopen Manston Airport — a major regional employer renowned for its role in the second world war. It was a high for Ukip and its then leader, Nigel Farage. Its victory, however, soon descended into bickering. In elections on Thursday, the self-proclaimed "People's Army" is standing a meagre three candidates for the 56 seats on Thanet District Council. In the district's towns of Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Margate, the party's local infrastructure has disappeared. Candidates, supporters and activists have fled.

<https://www.ft.com/content/8d960bf0-6b5c-11e9-a9a5-351eeaf6d84>

### **Gavin Williamson sacking 'personal blow' for May**

The shock decision to sack the defence secretary came after senior ministers demanded a full inquiry into a National Security Council leak. Downing Street sources have pointed out the prime minister spoke of her sadness at her decision to fire Gavin Williamson in her letter setting out the reasons for her decision. But they made clear that having conducted a full inquiry into the leak, there could be no other explanation other than the former defence secretary handed over sensitive information to a journalist. Before sitting in the cabinet, Mr Williamson was the chief whip, making him one of Theresa May's most trusted senior colleagues.

<https://news.sky.com/story/gavin-williamson-sacking-personal-blow-for-may-11708931>

### **The Guardian view on the Gavin Williamson sacking: a man who leaked ambition**

It is symptomatic of the malaise of Brexit that personal ambitions have taken over as the animating impulse in too many cabinet ministers. There appears no depth to which Mr Williamson wouldn't drop to prove that he had metamorphosed into a nationalist rabble-rouser. He was shallow: responding to Treasury cheese-paring with the idea of mounting guns on tractors as makeshift mobile missile launchers. He showboated: suggesting that Gibraltarians could be armed with paintball guns to fire at passing Spanish ships to scare them off. In response, it was reported, generals simply rolled their eyes. Perhaps nobody else has behaved quite so badly. But this sorry episode reminds the nation that many Conservatives are losing their grip on reality when they ought to be grappling with the most complex piece of statecraft in a generation.

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/01/the-guardian-view-on-the-gavin-williamson-sacking-a-man-who-leaked-ambition?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/01/the-guardian-view-on-the-gavin-williamson-sacking-a-man-who-leaked-ambition?CMP=share_btn_tw)

### **How ultra-remainers could score a spectacular own goal on Brexit**

Labour's left was once bitterly denounced for putting purity ahead of power. With Farageism on the brink of winning a national poll, and with Labour having already jeopardised the coalition of remainers and leavers it needs to win, the same people who once angrily made this argument are themselves most guilty of it. Imagine being a second referendum supporter who is so furious with a party that has twice voted for their objective that you'd allow your supposed mortal enemy to win an election and destroy your own cause. Well, you don't have to imagine it: because in three weeks'

time, that is what will happen.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/01/remainers-own-goal-brexit-nigel-farage-brexit-party-second-referendum-labour>

### **UKIP candidate Mark Meechan linked to racist forum posts**

Scottish UKIP candidate Mark Meechan was a prominent user of an online forum that contained racist language and threats against ethnic minorities. The forum was closed down by its host, US-based gaming community site Discord, following inquiries by the BBC. The chat group, which was littered with racist and Islamophobic terms as well as support for neo-Nazi groups, was promoted from Mr Meechan's Twitter. Mr Meechan said the forum "operates on the principle of free speech". The 31-year-old YouTube blogger, from Coatbridge, was convicted last year of posting a video of his girlfriend's pug lifting a paw when he said "gas the Jews" or "Sieg Heil". It was described by a sheriff as anti-Semitic and racist but Mr Meechan denied he was a racist and said his conviction set "a very dangerous precedent" for free speech.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-48094266>

### **Labour MP - who said party is not pro-Remain - now 'desperately worried' about losing Remainers**

A Labour MP who claimed that Labour is 'not a Remain party' has now expressed concerns that it is losing Remainers after a series of member resignations. It had been hoped that the leadership would provide a more positive line on a People's Vote as the country heads to the European elections, but instead the National Executive Committee endorsed Jeremy Corbyn's pro-Brexit message, which appears to keep a public vote option as a last resort. Now Barry Gardiner, a member of the Labour frontbench, has said he is "desperately worried" about losing the support of Remainers after many turned to social media to announce their resignations. That is despite recently telling anti-Brexit campaigners that Labour is "not a Remain party". He was grilled by LBC radio presenter, Iain Dale about the rise in resignations since the announcement on its manifesto.

<https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/barry-gardiner-in-discussion-with-iain-dale-on-brexit-manifesto-1-6027184>

### **Corbyn refuses to back a second referendum - but not because he's a closet Brexiteer**

It was the first line of the spokesperson's statement that gave the game away: "We are working to bring the country together after the chaos and crisis created by the Tories." To translate that into normal English: we hope that both Leavers and Remainers will continue to vote for us, while the Conservative Party goes into meltdown for its failure to deliver Brexit. So far, the Milne-Corbyn strategy seems to be working fine.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/corbyn-nec-labour-referendum-final-say-a8893486.html>

### **Activists Are Trying To Force Mastercard To Cut Off Payments To The Far-Right**

Activists have successfully forced Mastercard to hold a vote by shareholders on a proposal which, if passed, could see the company monitoring payments to global far-right political leaders and white supremacist groups. The proposal aims to see Mastercard establish an internal "human rights committee" that would stop designated white supremacist groups and anti-Islam activists, such as Tommy Robinson, from getting access to money sent from donors using the company's card payment services. It's been conceived by US-based political activists SumOfUs, who want to escalate the battle against white supremacists and far-right groups from tech platforms like Facebook, Google, Twitter, Patreon, and PayPal to one of the biggest companies in world finance, in an attempt to choke off donations. Robinson and several other leading figures in the global far right have been forced in recent months to solicit donations directly on their websites via Mastercard, Visa, and American Express after PayPal banned payments to them. Facebook also disabled the donation function on Robinson's fan page before deleting it completely.

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/markdistefano/mastercard-activists-cut-off-donations-far-right>

### **Brexit Party candidate criticised for past IRA defence**

The father of a murdered schoolboy has criticised a top Brexit Party candidate over "absolutely disgraceful" comments about the Warrington IRA bombing. European elections candidate Claire Fox was a leading member of the far-left Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) which defended the fatal attack. Colin Parry, whose son Tim died in the 1993 bombing, said she "should disavow these comments if that's her position". A Brexit Party spokesman said Ms Fox "does not hold those views now". Tim Parry, 12, and Johnathan Ball, three, were killed in the IRA bombing on March 20, 1993, which left 56 others injured.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-48112981>

### **Labour is winning the ground war in the local elections while the Tories have gone missing**

Prime Minister's questions today comes on the eve of the local elections so you can expect both leaders to use the opportunity for a spot of last minute campaigning. Theresa May will dutifully go through the motions of defending her Government's record while refusing to acknowledge her party is facing a hammering in tomorrow's poll. The consequences of years of austerity are far more noticeable at a local level than the national one. The cumulative impact of the cuts can be seen in the closure of your local leisure centre, the potholes in the roads, the rationing of social care, the absence of community support officers, the state of the local park, the fly-tipping and the loss of your library.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/labour-winning-ground-war-local-14977340>

### **Conservative Party's biggest Brexit mistake revealed - 'We were crazy to do it'**

Theresa May has been the subject of heavy criticism from members of her party after she agreed to a further extension to the Brexit process to seek support for her proposed withdrawal deal. Commentator Tim Montgomerie claimed the Conservative Party had made a "crazy" mistake when members maintained the Prime Minister in power despite Mrs May losing the overall majority she had inherited from her predecessor at the 2017 General Election. Addressing the public at a Centre of Independent Studies event in Sydney, Mr Montgomerie said: "If we were here for the rest of the afternoon, we could go through listing the major mistakes that Theresa May has made since she became Prime Minister.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1121257/Brexit-news-Conservative-Party-Theresa-May-resign-UK-EU-withdrawal-agreement-latest>

### **Scout leader quits after troop delivers Conservative election leaflets in Lincolnshire**

A Scout leader has quit after children in his troop handed out leaflets for two Conservative candidates in the local elections. The Scout Association said a complaint had been made about youngsters from 1st Marshchapel group in Lincolnshire delivering the information and several volunteers had resigned. The Scouts had been told they could rent an allotment space for a year to grow vegetables for a soup kitchen in return for distributing the leaflets, according to reports. The leaflets were promoting Conservative candidates Paul Rickett and Daniel McNally, who are campaigning for the East Lindsey District Council elections this Thursday.

<https://news.sky.com/story/scouts-used-to-deliver-conservative-election-leaflets-in-lincolnshire-11708157>

### **On election trail in Yorkshire with Labour where Theresa May faces wipeout**

Climbing a hilly stone terrace, we're hailed from the window of a second-floor by 44 year old Richard Wilson, who wants to put up Labour Party poster. In the next street - a stone's throw from the birthplace of the late poet laureate Ted Hughes - Lesley Clemson, 52, asks "What have the Conservatives done for us? We need Labour in power for action on schools and housing." Mum Elspeth Allan, 41, comes to the door with toddler Otilie, insisting: "It's very disheartening what's happened with Brexit, but it's important to vote Labour." A few doors further up Jordan James, 29, an

IT manager, admits to disillusion over Europe. He said: "I wasn't sure, I've voted Labour before, and I will do again." This is getting like a fan-fest. Where are all the unhappy, brassed-off Tykes who are going to stay at home tomorrow? If they exist, they must be hiding from Roisin's electoral blandishments.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/election-trail-yorkshire-labour-theresa-14976292>

### **Russian Oligarch's wife paid £135,000 for dinner with Theresa May and SIX female cabinet ministers**

Theresa May and six female Cabinet members had a night out with the wife of a former Vladimir Putin ally who had donated £135,000 at a Tory fundraiser. Lubov Chernukhin was entertained by the Prime Minister at the five-star Goring Hotel in Belgravia on Monday evening. It is understood the banker won the dinner as an auction prize at the Conservative Party's Black and White ball earlier this year. The £135,000 bid takes Mrs Chernukhin's donations to the Tories over the past seven years past the £1million mark. The party has insisted that Mrs Chernukhin, now a British citizen, is not a 'Putin crony'. But the money will raise fresh questions about the Tories' links to Russia just a year after the Salisbury spy poisoning. Five years ago, David Cameron faced questions after Mrs Chernukhin successfully bid £160,000 at a party fundraising dinner to play tennis against him and Boris Johnson.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6976843/Its-Ladies-night-Theresa-Cabinet-rivals-Brexit-feud-one-London-hot-el.html>

### **UKIP 'not a safety valve for disaffected Tories' says Batten**

Gerard Batten has dismissed Nigel Farage's Brexit Party as a "Tory-lite" ego trip as he insisted only UKIP has a "clear policy" for leaving the EU. Launching its European election campaign in Middlesbrough, the UKIP leader said democracy was under threat if the Brexit vote was not honoured. UKIP was a "real political party" with members and a rule book, he said. Its rival, he said, was a "wholly owned subsidiary of one man's ego" and a "safety valve for disaffected Tories". Mr Farage, UKIP's figurehead for two decades, quit the party after a bitter fallout with Mr Batten last year.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48118829>

### **BBC spots the flaw with UKIP man's call for UK Muslims to march against Brunei**

Stuart Agnew said the UK "Muslim population" should march against Brunei's sickening anti-gay law - but gave a rather different answer when asked about UK Christians.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/bbc-spots-problem-ukip-mans-14977391>

### **8m UK voters not registered ahead of European elections - study**

Nearly 8 million people in Britain eligible to vote in the European elections are not yet registered, campaigners have said as the deadline looms. Research commissioned by Best for Britain, the pro-remain campaign, and undertaken by Number Cruncher Politics suggests 7.9 million eligible voters are not on the electoral roll in their local area. The figure is based on population and nationality data, estimates of what proportion of the population is registered to vote in each region, and research from the Electoral Commission on the accuracy of the electoral register. The Green party MP, Caroline Lucas, said: "It's really concerning that huge swathes of people across the country who have the right to vote in the European elections this May aren't currently registered.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/01/eight-million-eligible-uk-voters-not-registered-ahead-of-european-elections-study-finds>

## **Political Shenanigans**

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### **Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson sacked over Huawei leak**

Gavin Williamson has been sacked as defence secretary following an inquiry into a leak from a top-

level National Security Council meeting. Downing Street said the PM had "lost confidence in his ability to serve" and Penny Mordaunt will take on the role. The inquiry followed reports over a plan to allow Huawei limited access to help build the UK's new 5G network. Mr Williamson, who has been defence secretary since 2017, "strenuously" denies leaking the information. In a meeting with Mr Williamson on Wednesday evening, Theresa May told him she had information that provided "compelling evidence" that he was responsible for the unauthorised disclosure. In a letter confirming his dismissal, she said: "No other, credible version of events to explain this leak has been identified." Responding in a letter to the PM, Mr Williamson said he was "confident" that a "thorough and formal inquiry" would have "vindicated" his position.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48126974>

*Additional sources: (Bloomberg)*

**@Tom\_Watson If he has leaked from the National Security Council, Gavin Williamson should be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. And he should forgo his ministerial severance pay.**

If he has leaked from the National Security Council, Gavin Williamson should be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. And he should forgo his ministerial severance pay.

[https://twitter.com/tom\\_watson/status/1123637066292760576](https://twitter.com/tom_watson/status/1123637066292760576)

**MPs make history by passing Commons motion to declare 'environment and climate change emergency'**

Introducing the motion on Wednesday, Mr Corbyn called on MPs to recognise the "devastating impact" that volatile and extreme weather will have on all walks of life, as he urged them to "declare an environment and climate emergency". "We have no time to waste," he added. "We are living in a climate crisis that will spiral dangerously out of control unless we take rapid and dramatic action now. "This is no longer about a distant future. We are talking about nothing less than the irreversible destruction of the environment within our lifetimes." During the debate on the motion environment secretary Michael Gove, who met with climate activists at Westminster on Tuesday, also said the government recognises "the situation we face is an emergency", but stopped short of meeting Labour's demands to officially declare one.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/climate-change-environment-emergency-commons-motion-mps-vote-latest-a8895456.html>

*Additional sources: (BBC News)*

**U.K.'s May and Corbyn Hint That a Brexit Deal Could Be in Sight**

Theresa May and her arch political rival Jeremy Corbyn are both signaling they may be edging closer to a Brexit deal after a month of talks between their teams that seemed to be going nowhere. Both the U.K. government and the main opposition Labour Party talked up the prospects for a compromise plan and will hold more negotiations in the days ahead. The prime minister is aiming to wrap up the talks next week, either with an agreement or without one. On Wednesday, May signaled she could move on one of her key red lines and allow the U.K. to sign up to some kind of permanent customs union with the EU. The pound strengthened. "There is a greater commonality in terms of some of the benefits of a customs union that we've already identified between ourselves and the official opposition," May told a parliamentary committee. "Looking at the balance of these issues is part of the discussion. Can we come to an agreement on that? I hope we will be able to."

[https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-01/are-theresa-may-and-jeremy-corbyn-about-to-agree-a-brexit-deal?cmpid%3D=socialflow-facebook-brexit&utm\\_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=brexit&utm\\_source=twitter](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-01/are-theresa-may-and-jeremy-corbyn-about-to-agree-a-brexit-deal?cmpid%3D=socialflow-facebook-brexit&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic&utm_medium=social&utm_content=brexit&utm_source=twitter)

**'Brexit customs union the only option left for Theresa May,' says Corbyn ally**

Rebecca Long-Bailey made clear, however, that Mrs May will have to make a decisive shift towards

Labour's policy for a customs union. "I think, pragmatically, that they potentially may have no option in order to be able to push this deal through," she told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. A Tory source said the key question was whether Mr Corbyn and shadow chancellor John McDonnell "are willing to dip their hands in the blood of Brexit" and risk a split with pro-EU colleagues such as shadow Brexit secretary Sir Keir Starmer and deputy leader Tom Watson.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/brexit-customs-union-the-only-option-left-for-theresa-may-says-corbyn-ally-a4131221.html>

### **Tories delay Theresa May's showdown with furious members so she can host Donald Trump**

Tory party chiefs are to delay Theresa May's showdown reckoning with furious members to allow her to host Donald Trump. An unprecedented Emergency General Meeting is due to be called in early June amid a grassroots activists' revolt over Brexit.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8975686/theresa-may-tory-showdown-delayed-donald-trump-state-visit/>

### **Brexit makes the case for an independent Scotland - At the whim of the Tory party, Scots have been told to surrender their European identity**

When Scotland voted to maintain the union with England, the argument that separation would diminish both nations seemed compelling. Five years on, Nicola Sturgeon says Brexit has broken the bargain. Scotland's first minister and leader of the Scottish National party is preparing for a possible second referendum by mid-2021. Ms Sturgeon may be a touch impatient. She is also essentially right. Leaving the EU unpicks the logic of Scotland's place in the UK. The independence vote in September 2014 saw 55 per cent support the union and 45 per cent opt for independence. The decision was clear, and yet still close enough to represent a reprieve rather than an unequivocal commitment to the status quo. The unspoken message was that the cloak of Britishness thrown over England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could not be taken for granted.

<https://www.ft.com/content/a05dd0ce-6c10-11e9-80c7-60ee53e6681d>

### **Corbyn's attempt to play the electorate over Brexit has backfired. Now neither side needs Labour to get what they want**

Next year, ringed in the calendar by the Labour leader and shadow chancellor as the likely date of the next election, might then mark the beginning of the end of Corbynism. "People are starting to think about life after Jeremy," said one Corbyn loyalist. It is a process that will gather pace now that Labour's national executive committee (NEC) has rejected grassroots calls for the party to support a Final Say referendum on any Brexit deal. Corbyn now risks alienating the very members who ensured his 2015 victory.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-jeremy-corbyn-labour-nec-second-referendum-brexiters-remain-a8894441.html>

### **Elephant on the doorstep: Plymouth's politicians don't mention Brexit**

A third of the council's seats are up for grabs on 2 May. There are currently only Conservative and Labour councillors in Plymouth (26 and 31 respectively), meaning the Tories would need to gain three seats to steal Labour's majority. Neither party thinks that is likely to happen. "I think it will be tough," says the council's Conservative group leader, Ian Bowyer. "There are no two ways about that." Plymouth voted to leave the European Union by 60% to 40% and Bowyer is open about the fact that the Brexit stalemate in Westminster has damaged his party's chances. "Without the raging Brexit arguments and the lack of performance that people see in Westminster, I think we would have had a better chance," he says. Mercer puts it rather more strongly. "I think the electorate are in no mood to vote Conservative," he says. "Because we have signally failed to deliver our primary policy. The prime minister has said for two and a half years that if we don't get a good deal we will be leaving anyway. I and thousands of others believed her and it was not the case."

[https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/01/plymouth-politicians-dont-mention-brexit-anti-politics-local-elections?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/01/plymouth-politicians-dont-mention-brexit-anti-politics-local-elections?CMP=share_btn_tw)

### **Dear Corbyn: If you fail to challenge Brexit, you will throw away your support**

Take Lara McNeill, the NEC representative for Young Labour: in a blog post yesterday – posted just after she had retweeted a meme which claimed that the Communications Union’s rejection of a second referendum was “quality socialism” – how, exactly? – she made claim that “it is clear that the electorate’s desire to honour the 2016 referendum result is hardening rather than dissipating.” In fact, the number of those who thought the UK was wrong to vote to leave, rather than right, at close to an all time high. Remain now has a consistent lead in the polls, with the lead among those who think the decision to leave the EU being wrong having grown to as much as eight points in recent months. And the overwhelming majority of young Labour members, voters, and activists backing a fresh referendum. Yet McNeill supplies no positive evidence for her claim. It’s not what the statistics say – and not what I hear from local party, Momentum and activist meetings. She also claims that it is the role of the NEC to decide which parts of established policy to include in the manifesto, not “turn existing policy on its head.” Fine – but a public vote on any deal was voted for by Jeremy Corbyn and the vast majority of the front bench on April 1st. Were they making up policy then?

<https://leftfootforward.org/2019/04/dear-corbyn-if-you-fail-to-challenge-brexit-you-will-throw-away-your-support/>

### **@BethRigby The PM's letter firing Gavin Williamson**

The PM's letter firing Gavin Williamson

<https://twitter.com/BethRigby/status/1123632523966337024>

### **May weighs up remaining in an EU customs union**

Theresa May is considering agreeing to keep the UK inside the EU’s tariff wall to secure a Brexit deal, which would restrict the country’s ability to do trade deals on goods but allow it to strike agreements on services. The move could satisfy the opposition Labour party’s demand that Britain stay within the bloc’s common external tariff. The prime minister has been warned by Conservative chief whip Julian Smith that unless she strikes a deal on a customs union with Labour a second referendum would be a likely outcome, prompting ministers to scramble to find a possible compromise. Mrs May insisted to MPs on Wednesday she wanted to maintain an “independent trade policy” after Brexit but her allies said that this did not necessarily cover all parts of the British economy. “You could come up with a solution where you have freedom to do trade deals in some areas but not others,” said one person close to Mrs May. Downing Street declined to comment.

<https://www.ft.com/content/c8d0f45a-6c10-11e9-a9a5-351eeaf6d84>

### **Cabinet ministers split over customs union Brexit deal with Labour**

Cabinet ministers are bitterly divided over whether Brexit talks with Labour should broach the possibility of a customs union, with several sceptical that such a deal could even command a majority in parliament or survive hostile backbench amendments. A senior cabinet minister suggested a deal involving a customs union could be backed by as few as 90 Tory MPs and would mean a slew of resignations from the government payroll. It is also likely to be opposed by the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and other smaller parties, as well as dozens of Labour MPs who would only back a deal if it included a confirmatory referendum.

[https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/01/cabinet-ministers-split-over-customs-union-brexit-deal-with-labour?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Tweet](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/01/cabinet-ministers-split-over-customs-union-brexit-deal-with-labour?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Tweet)

### **Chief whip warned cabinet that referendum or customs union are price of Brexit**

I imagine you all know this, but I am told it is true that Julian Smith told cabinet that the only way to get the Brexit deal through the Commons is for the Government and Theresa May to agree either to hold a confirmatory ballot or to commit to a customs union. Which sounds to me like the chief whip

telling the PM and ministers that the only way to secure Brexit is to ignore dearest preferences of the majority of Tory MPs and get her Brexit ratified by relying on the official opposition. Which would probably destroy the Tory party. And therefore maybe he was in practice saying that there is no Brexit without a General Election (presumably with a new Tory leader). Apparently the PM did not make any comment on the chief whip's briefing.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-05-01/chief-whip-warned-cabinet-that-referendum-or-customs-union-are-price-of-brexit/>

### **Michael Gove tells Cabinet it would be better to have 'unpalatable' deal with Labour than no Brexit**

In a boost for ongoing cross-party talks, the Environment Secretary is said to have told Cabinet colleagues this week that the Conservatives might need to give ground to the opposition to reach an agreement. According to The Telegraph, Mr Gove - who campaigned for Brexit in 2016 - warned that an "unpalatable" deal with the opposition would be better than the "disastrous" outcome of Brexit being shelved altogether.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/foreign-affairs/brexit/news/103566/michael-gove-tells-cabinet-it-would-be-better-have>

### **Brexit: Theresa May admits she could cave in to Labour demands to stay in customs union**

Theresa May has admitted she could agree to stay in a customs union in a bid to rescue Brexit, saying she "can't pre-empt" the result of the talks with Labour. The prime minister's spokesman refused - four times - to rule out the concession, which would enrage many Conservative MPs and almost certainly trigger cabinet resignations. "I can't pre-empt what will come out of talks," he said, asked if Ms May was prepared to agree to the central demand made by Jeremy Corbyn.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-deal-customs-union-theresa-may-corbyn-labour-trade-eu-a8894546.html>

### **Is an independent Scotland now inevitable? I'm beginning to believe it might be**

Fast forward a year and a bit, and Britain has finally left the European Union, even if the nature of its future relationship with Brussels has yet to be settled. Unfortunately, another problem has loomed into view. By a comfortable majority, Scots have voted for an independent Scotland. A triumphant Nicola Sturgeon stands before Edinburgh's St Andrew's House, seat of the Scottish government, to announce that two years hence, the more than three centuries old Act of Union with England will be dissolved. Now fast forward to the moment of departure, and the Scottish government is finding that, like Brexit, actually leaving a union of such long standing in a manner that is not going to be economically that straight forward

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/05/01/independent-scotland-now-inevitable-beginning-believe-might/>

### **Brexit: May hopes UK will leave 'well before' 31 October deadline**

Theresa May has said she hopes the UK will leave the EU well before the new 31 October Brexit deadline. She told MPs there was no reason the UK could not leave in a matter of weeks once MPs backed an agreement, which they have so far rejected three times. She signalled she hoped to get Labour backing for any new customs proposal before putting it to Parliament again. She said their aims were "very similar" and "sometimes people use different terms to mean the same thing". Labour wants the PM to sign up to the idea of a customs union with the EU, something she has adamantly opposed up to now, and some have suggested she is moving in their direction. Most Conservative MPs have said they would not support the move, saying it would mean the UK would not have an independent trade policy.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48124103>

### **'Stop stereotyping the north as Brexitland' say four Labour MPs**

Four North Labour MPs, Mary Creagh, Anna Turley, Phil Wilson, and Catherine McKinnell, set out why they believe 'published opinion' is wrong about the region's voters. "THERE is no such thing as public opinion," said Winston Churchill. "There is only published opinion." If you are an MP in the North of England, as we are, "published opinion" (and Nigel Farage) tells you we are surrounded by shouty people who all voted for Brexit; whose entire lives are dominated by anger that the "elites" are betraying them. "Published opinion" states that we Northern Labour MPs live in constant fear of losing our seats, unless we repeat that mantra that Leave Means Leave, and if we don't deliver "the will of the people", we are all heading for the political scrapyard. How dare the media use our constituents to reaffirm Brexit stereotypes of 2016? They were stereotypes then and they still are. Yes, we all know Leavers who still want Brexit. But we also know Leavers who, now they know what Brexit will mean for their families, jobs and incomes, have changed their mind. We know people who are adamantly opposed to a People's Vote. We know others who were opposed but who now see it as the only democratic way out of the mess we are in.

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/17580613.stop-stereotyping-the-north-as-brexiland-say-four-labour-mps/>