

# News from the Brexit Cliff Edge

## 26th Feb 2019

---

### News Highlights

---

#### Welcome to the Brexit Cliff Edge

- The CBI tweeted that a No Deal Brexit will damage every region and nation of the UK and must be avoided at all costs
- The ADS Group, which represents aerospace and defence in the UK, said the risk of a No Deal Brexit would be `an unforgivable act of economic and social self-harm`
- New research published in the Medical Journal, The Lancet, sets out reasons why a No Deal Brexit would seriously damage the NHS
- The UK safety regime covering everything from household products to medicines, depends on an EU programme known as the Reach database. In the event of a No Deal animal testing could surge, as companies are forced to duplicate health and safety tests underpinning the safety of everything from medicines to household products, as the new governing body starts from scratch to protect the consumer
- Larry Fink, CEO of Black Rock, the world`s largest asset manager has slammed the UK government`s handling of Brexit, saying `it has become a problem for every private sector company in the world`
- British Chamber of Commerce boss Adam Marshall attacked Theresa May`s decision to postpone a meaningful vote on Brexit to March 12th, saying that `17 days for businesses to adjust to what may be the biggest economic and trading change they face in a generation is unacceptable`
- France 24 reported on the UK stockpiling vital medicines such as insulin for diabetics, with pharmaceutical companies creating up to 6 weeks stock to cope with expected severe disruption from a No Deal Brexit
- The British Retail Consortium chief pictured members frantically trying to prepare for a messy Brexit at short notice. The article also quoted an unnamed FTSE 100 CEO, who said he knew that some companies in the UK are considering the nuclear option and just leaving, in the event of a No Deal Brexit
- The Sun reported that Theresa May would formally rule out a No Deal Brexit, at Cabinet later today. The paper reports this as opening a door to a delay in the Brexit process. Tory hardliners in the ERG are expected to be less than amused. However, May still wants to keep a No Deal option alive for later in the year as `negotiating pressure on Brussels`
- The EU is pondering making an offer of 2 years extension to Article 50 for the UK, thus, allowing it more time
- Labour was widely reported to be `moving towards supporting a Second Referendum.` Corbyn said he initially wants to back the Wilson-Kyle Amendment in Parliament, which offers to support a Theresa May-led Brexit plan, so long as it is then put to the country in a referendum. Even so, it is still unclear whether Labour wants Remain in the EU to be an option in any future referendum. If and when the Wilson-Kyle amendment is defeated, Labour will back the Cooper-Letwin amendment in Parliament to delay Brexit
- Theresa May said she wants to carry on with the next phase of Brexit, and believes she must press on to achieve some of the things she promised voters on taking office before standing down as PM

- A Eurotunnel lawsuit against Chris Grayling, over the proposed £14m Brexit ferry contract saga, has revealed that the minister is trying to keep the majority of documents in relation to the contract out of the public domain, and this is not legally justifiable, according to the judge
- The Sun political correspondent tweeted that Theresa May was considering getting a Withdrawal Agreement through Parliament BEFORE it is even signed off by the EU27
- UK Ministers are planning a `hardship fund` for Britons impoverished by a No Deal Brexit
- An opinion poll by YouGov says the Tories are on 36%, Labour 23% and TIG 18% with the Lib Dems on 6%. This means combined TIG and the Lib Dems now poll higher than Labour
- Brexit is not even in the top 10 list of German business priorities, according to Ralf Lissek, CEO of the German-Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- LBC heard from Jessica Simor QC who explained that in her recent court action against the government over Brexit, the judge made it clear that if the referendum had been legally binding, any illegal action on the part of Vote Leave would make it null and void. However, as the referendum was advisory only, this rule does not apply and the PM is free to do as she wishes

## **Economic Impact**

---

### **@CBITweets says "No deal will damage every region and nation of the UK"**

No deal will damage every region and nation of the UK

<https://twitter.com/CBITweets/status/1100020085165572097>

### **No-deal Brexit risks 'full-blown economic crisis'**

The risk of a no-deal Brexit is turning into a "full-blown economic crisis", the aerospace trade body has warned. ADS Group said it was now able to track "the very real economic damage being caused" by the continuing uncertainty over the UK's exit from the EU. Its warning comes as insurance trade body, the ABI, said a no-deal Brexit "would be a be an unforgivable act of economic and social self-harm". The UK is due to leave the EU on 29 March, but no deal is yet in place.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47356866>

## **Administrative Fall Out**

---

### **Brexit 'will cause significant harm to the NHS'**

The availability of medicines and vaccines, the healthcare workforce, NHS financing and access to medical research would all be negatively impacted by a no-deal Brexit, according to a review published in medical journal The Lancet. The authors warn "little evidence exists that the UK is prepared for any of the eventualities set out in their analysis". The report adds: "For instance, the recently published NHS 10-year plan ran to 136 pages, with only two mentions of Brexit, neither of which offered any detail about what it might mean or how any threats would be addressed."

<https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/uk/brexit-will-cause-significant-harm-to-the-nhs/>

### **No-Deal Brexit Will Seriously Damage NHS, Academics Warn In The Lancet Review**

A no-deal Brexit will cause "significant harm" to the NHS, top health academics have warned in a new paper. The medical journal The Lancet says that any form of leaving the EU will harm the health service, but that quitting without a withdrawal agreement will be "by far the worst option". The medical journal outlines how NHS staffing numbers, finances and medicine will be impacted under four Brexit scenarios, and concludes that the only way to avoid damaging healthcare is to remain a member of the bloc. The authors warn "little evidence exists that the UK is prepared for any of the eventualities set out in their analysis".

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/no-deal-brexit-nhs\\_uk\\_5c74168be4b04927a8764da4?ncid=other\\_twitter\\_coo09wqtham&utm\\_campaign=share\\_twitter](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/no-deal-brexit-nhs_uk_5c74168be4b04927a8764da4?ncid=other_twitter_coo09wqtham&utm_campaign=share_twitter)

## **Brexit could trigger major surge in animal testing as EU rules are invalidated, experts warn**

Experiments on animals may have to be replicated if UK companies cannot access testing data for everything from household products to medicines. Animal testing could surge in the UK after Brexit as companies are forced to duplicate procedures underpinning the safety of everything from medicines to household cleaning products. Experts have warned of unnecessary harm to animals, as well as considerable costs for businesses, amid the uncertainty of a potential no-deal outcome. Chemicals found in an enormous variety of products are currently regulated under an EU programme known as Reach. If the government cannot agree on a deal that maintains its access to the system, it has said it will create its own UK-based version that essentially “copy and pastes” from the EU database.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-no-deal-animal-testing-chemicals-eu-reach-michael-gove-a8796031.html>

## **BlackRock CEO unhappy with UK's handling of Brexit — report**

The chief executive of BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, has criticised the UK government's handling of Brexit, saying it has become a problem for every private sector company in the world. The comments from Larry Fink, made in an interview with CNBC, come as UK Prime Minister Theresa May struggles to renegotiate the terms of a withdrawal agreement struck with Brussels last year, and avoid a no-deal Brexit on March 29. Fink told CNBC: “Brexit is an immediate problem, and it's a problem that's quite frankly annoying every private sector organisation in the world today. “The irresponsibility right now of the UK in coming to a resolution is putting more and more private sector organisations on alert.”

<https://www.fnondon.com/articles/blackrock-ceo-unhappy-with-uks-handling-of-brexit-report-20190225>

## **The hidden cost of Brexit: how political wrangling has derailed vital consumer protections**

Vital consumer protections have fallen by the wayside thanks to the Government's slow progress on Brexit, experts have claimed. More than half of the consultations launched by government departments in 2018 are still waiting for a response, according to the Consultation Institute, a watchdog. Official guidelines state that a reason for delay should be given if responses are not published within 12 weeks. This target was not met in 204 of 414 cases last year. Among the policy discussions that have stalled are a solution to the care funding crisis, reform of leasehold home ownership and proper regulation of the funeral plans sector. Social care was the issue that arguably cost Prime Minister Theresa her majority in 2018 and it is still not addressed

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/hidden-cost-brexit-political-wrangling-has-derailed-vital-consumer/>

## **@BCCAdam 17 days' notice for businesses, employees, investors and communities on what may be the biggest economic and trading change they face in a generation. Unbelievable. #Brexit**

A parliamentary vote on March 12th for something that's meant to take effect on March 29th. 17 days' notice for businesses, employees, investors and communities on what may be the biggest economic and trading change they face in a generation. Unbelievable. #Brexit

<https://twitter.com/BCCAdam/status/1099693119178600455>

## **Failure to agree a special post-Brexit intelligence deal would cause 'significant damage' to both UK and EU security**

Britain would have less access to EU information systems than the US, Canada and Australia. In a lengthy paper calling for a bespoke UK-EU permanent security arrangement, it argues that Britain makes a disproportionate contribution to over 40 EU data systems and cooperation arrangements so

it's in "neither party's interest to unnecessarily impede this flow of critical information". RUSI research fellow Alexander Babuta calls on the EU to consider creating new precedents for a third country to be granted access to certain critical databases - regardless of whether there is a deal.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/brexit/8509908/post-brexit-intelligence-deal-uk-eu-security/>

### **Britons face five-hour airport queues in Spain with no-deal Brexit**

British tourists to Spain could face airport queues of five hours or more after a no-deal Brexit, according to analysis by Which?, and the consumer group suggests travellers should take food, water and even nappies to survive prolonged delays

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/26/britons-face-five-hour-airport-queues-in-spain-with-no-deal-brexit>

### **Eurostar owner allays Brexit chaos fears**

The biggest shareholder in Eurostar has sought to allay fears that Brexit might hit - or even halt - the cross-Channel train service. Guillaume Pepy, head of France's SNCF railway company, told French media that it was working to ensure smooth travel "whatever the [Brexit] scenario". He said "details" still needed to be worked out, but the service's "fundamentals" would not be affected.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47365583>

### **Hard to stomach - the malnutrition emergency in the NHS**

"Today, malnutrition affects at least 3 million people in the UK." This was the sobering statistic shared by Declan O'Brien, Director General of British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA), as he addressed an early morning roundtable in the House of Commons. The BSNA event, sponsored by David Tredinnick MP, brought together parliamentarians and concerned health professionals to discuss the challenges faced by patients at risk of malnutrition and how the NHS can shape greater support for the future. Chairing the event, Mr O'Brien laid out the reality of the situation. "Currently one in three people in care homes, one in 10 visiting their GP and one in four people admitted to hospital are malnourished," he said. "We know the number of malnourished people is increasing rather than decreasing, so we have a real problem."

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/health-and-care/illnesstreatments/opinion/british-specialist-nutrition-association-bsna>

### **Diabetics stock up on insulin over Brexit fears**

Diabetics and insulin providers in Britain are stockpiling the precious medicine to avoid potential shortages in case Britain leaves the European Union without a deal in just over month's time. Diabetes UK and another group, JDRF, have called on the government to provide more details on its preparations in case of a no-deal. They point out that in addition to insulin, people with diabetes use other drugs and imported products such as needles, insulin pumps, and devices used to measure blood glucose levels.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20190226-diabetics-stock-insulin-over-brexit-fears>

### **Hub in Belgium to keep NHS supplied in event of no-deal Brexit**

The government has created a logistics hub in Belgium where vital medical supplies will be stockpiled to stop the NHS running short of equipment if there is a no-deal Brexit. The Department of Health and Social Care has also arranged to get NHS supplies - including drugs - into Britain using seven new ferry routes, to bypass the chaos that is widely expected in and around Dover in the event of no deal. The Department for Transport has agreed to pay two companies, Brittany Ferries and the Danish firm DFDS, £88.8m to transport products from the hub across the Channel over the next six months. Suppliers, including pharmaceutical companies which will store their products elsewhere, will be given priority access to the ferries.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/25/hub-in-belgium-to-keep-nhs-supplied-in-event-of-no-deal-brexit>

### **Mirror owner warns over Brexit as it makes £200m writedown**

Simon Fox, the chief executive, said the write-down reflected the difficulties in generating advertising revenues locally and Brexit uncertainty. He said: "If there is a no deal there is a chance we could see a downturn in advertising." Reach has prepared for Brexit by increasing stockpiles of newsprint imported from Norway and Canada, he said. The company said while average monthly page views for its websites grew by 6% to more than 1bn last year, digital advertising revenues had been hit by "algorithm changes made by Facebook and Google early in 2018", which reduced the amount of Reach content being distributed via these platforms.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/25/mirror-owner-brexiteer-writedown-reach-express-star>

### **British Companies Are Frantically Preparing for a Messy Brexit**

There are limits to how much more some industries can prepare. For food manufacturers, chilled storage is full and fresh food can't be stockpiled. To try to stock up any more would be prohibitively expensive, said William Bain, a policy adviser at the British Retail Consortium, which represents more than 5,000 retailers. "People are busting a gut to make sure they do what's deliverable," Bain said. "Six months ago, people didn't feel we'd be in this position, but it's where we've landed." Some major firms still have their finger hovering over the nuclear option: to move outside the U.K., said a FTSE 100 chief executive officer, who asked not to be identified discussing confidential plans. If Britain confirms it's in a no-deal scenario, those companies will go, the person said.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-22/companies-trigger-last-ditch-brexiteer-plans-as-no-deal-looms>

### **Political Shenanigans**

---

#### **Theresa May to propose to Cabinet today that she formally rules out No-Deal Brexit**

Theresa May will today propose to Cabinet that she formally rules out a No Deal Brexit on March 29, opening the door to a delay. The decision will mean putting off Britain's EU exit by weeks or months if MPs still haven't passed a new divorce agreement in two weeks time. Mrs May's highly controversial move will infuriate hardline Tory Leavers. But allies of the PM say she has come to the difficult conclusion that the personal U-turn is the only way to avoid a "catastrophic" defeat by a Remain ministers' rebellion. In a bid to calm Brexiteers' fury, Mrs May still wants to keep the option of No Deal alive for later in the year as negotiating pressure on Brussels.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/brexit/8509130/theresa-may-delay-brexit-u-turn/>

#### **Brexit could be delayed by 2 years as Theresa May again postpones vote on her deal**

The EU is reportedly considering delaying Brexit by up to 2 years. The proposal comes after May once again delayed a parliamentary vote on her deal. MPs will now not get to vote on it until March 12, just days before Britain is due to crash out of the EU. Senior ministers in May's government are threatening to resign if she does not rule out a No Deal Brexit

<https://www.businessinsider.com/brexit-could-be-delayed-by-2-years-as-theresa-may-postpones-vote-on-deal-2019-2>

#### **Theresa May 'considering two-month Brexit delay' to stave off Article 50 rebellion**

According to the Telegraph, Downing Street officials this weekend circulated a proposal to ask Brussels for an extension to Article 50. The report comes just hours after Mrs May confirmed that the second meaningful vote on her Brexit deal will not take place until 12 March - teeing up the prospect of a fresh clash with her Cabinet.

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/news/102061/theresa-may-considering-two-month-brexit>

#### **Labour backs second referendum: Is this really happening?**

Advocates for a second referendum should not get over-excited just yet. There are still massive obstacles to securing it, let alone winning it. Labour support does not create a parliamentary majority. A chunk of Labour MPs - probably around 50 of them - would vote against any amendment on a People's Vote, regardless of whether the leadership backed it or not. This approach also

involves backing for May's deal, albeit with a rather massive snarling caveat, which may make many opposition MPs queasy. That could worsen the numerical problem. And there are only about a dozen Tory MPs who are prepared to support such an idea right now. That means a lot of minds need changing to secure a Commons majority

<http://www.politics.co.uk/blogs/2019/02/25/labour-backs-second-referendum-is-this-really-happening>

### **Labour prepared to back new Brexit referendum**

Labour has said it is prepared to back another EU referendum to prevent a "damaging Tory Brexit". Jeremy Corbyn has told Labour MPs the party will move to back another vote if their own proposed Brexit deal is rejected on Wednesday. Labour's Emily Thornberry said if the parliamentary process ended with a choice of no deal or the PM's deal, the public should decide. Theresa May is under growing pressure to delay the 29 March Brexit date. Labour are not yet making clear what their proposed referendum would be on.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47363307>

*Additional sources: (Telegraph.co.uk) (Sky News)*

### **David Mundell won't oppose no-deal Brexit because it's 'easy win' for SNP**

Scottish secretary David Mundell has been described as a "ghost of a minister" after walking away from a rebel cabinet group demanding no-deal Brexit be ruled out, because he didn't want to give the SNP an "easy win". Mundell accused the SNP of "actively pursuing a no deal Brexit in the belief that the chaos and confusion it would cause would increase support for Scotland leaving the UK." "I would urge you to work in Scotland's interests, not your party's," he added.

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/17457169.david-mundell-wont-oppose-no-deal-brexit-because-its-easy-win-for-snp/>

### **@JeremyCorbyn After meetings in Brussels and Madrid, it's clear that Labour's alternative plan for Brexit is credible and could be negotiated with the EU.**

After meetings in Brussels and Madrid, it's clear that Labour's alternative plan for Brexit is credible and could be negotiated with the EU.

<https://twitter.com/jeremycorbyn/status/1099985136802775040>

### **@BBCPolitics Theresa May once again rejects the idea of delaying #Brexit, saying "any extension of Article 50 isn't addressing the issues"**

Theresa May once again rejects the idea of delaying #Brexit, saying "any extension of Article 50 isn't addressing the issues"

<https://twitter.com/BBCPolitics/status/1100021749519765504>

### **A divided Labour could hand the Tories another 12 years of power**

In September 2016, the Labour party reached a turning point but then failed to turn. The re-election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader with an increased majority, despite the opposition of two thirds of his own MPs, seemed to make a split inevitable. But it wasn't until this week that Labour MPs found the nerve to leave the party and begin to form a new one: the Independent Group.

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/02/a-divided-labour-could-hand-the-tories-another-12-years-of-power/>

### **If Labour aids a Tory Brexit it will be destroyed by what follows**

The threat that Brexit poses to the British left is aptly summed up by an essay published 40 years ago. In The Great Moving Right Show, the late Stuart Hall laid out the scale of the challenge he believed the left faced from Thatcher - months before she even moved into No 10, years before she began her scorched-earth economics. But Hall saw it all coming: the populism of Thatcher, the way she would target schools and policing. And he saw how Thatcherism would win mass support: "Its success and effectivity does not lie in its capacity to dupe unsuspecting folk but in the way it addresses real problems, real and lived experiences, real contradictions - and yet is able to



represent them within a logic of discourse which pulls them systematically into line with policies and class strategies of the right.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/25/labour-aids-tory-brexiteer-destroyed>

### **Sparks fly at Parliamentary Labour Party meeting on second referendum**

The announcement that Labour will support an amendment calling for a second referendum if its own amendment to change the government’s negotiating position fails this week has proved divisive. While many MPs in the room welcomed the decision, even those who have campaigned for a second referendum were left frustrated. According to Owen Smith, Corbyn was asked 23 times if in a future referendum he would want Remain to be an option on the ballot paper. Corbyn declined to answer.

<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2019/02/sparks-fly-at-parliamentary-labour-party-meeting-on-second-referendum/>

### **Theresa May signals she will defy calls to quit within months over Brexit**

Theresa May has signalled she will defy calls to quit and let someone else negotiate the second stage of Brexit. The Prime Minister has faced demands to walk away once the UK has formally left the EU, allowing another figure to seize the No 10 keys and thrash out the terms of Britain's future relationship with Brussels. But she is desperate not to be remembered as “the Brexit PM” and wants to forge a domestic legacy. She told the Tories' backbench 1992 Committee in December that she would not fight the 2022 general election. But she has refused to outline a timetable for her departure.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-signals-defy-calls-quit-14047104>

*Additional sources: (Sky News)*

### **EU Considers 21-Month Delay If May Can't Get Brexit Done**

In just over a month, the U.K. is meant to be departing the union it’s belonged to for 40 years but the outlook has never looked more uncertain. May’s hands are increasingly tied by an unpopular divorce deal she sealed with the EU but that Parliament has rejected by a landslide. Brexit has proved to be such a divisive issue that both mainstream parties have suffered defections, businesses are panicking, and voters are exasperated. Delaying Brexit has the potential to split May’s Cabinet and her ruling party, triggering a rebellion from Brexit-supporting Tories who might even try to bring down her government.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-24/eu-is-said-to-mull-idea-of-proposing-brexiteer-extension-to-2021>

### **Rebel demands - Tory trio want PM to spell out timetable delaying Brexit if there’s No EU deal by mid-March**

Remain Cabinet ministers will demand Theresa May this week spells out a timetable to delay Brexit if there is no EU deal by mid-March as their price not to rebel. A public declaration by Amber Rudd, David Gauke and Greg Clark to a back a Commons bid this week to extend Article 50 talks ignited a fresh civil war at the top of Government. Brexiteer Cabinet ministers angrily accused the trio - who are joined by 20 other junior minister and dozens of backbench Tory MPs - of “astonishing disloyalty” and undermining the PM. But Mrs May herself turned a blind eye yesterday and refused to slap them down.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/brexit/8500303/tory-rebels-delay-brexit-timetable/>

### **Tony Blair: It’s 'bloody obvious' the case for independence is stronger**

If Scotland is in favour of staying in Europe, and you wrench the UK out of Europe, then yep, people who are arguing for independence are going to have another dimension to their argument”, Tony Blair said. “It doesn’t mean to say I agree with it, but it’s bound to have an impact.

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/17456205.tony-blair-its-bloody-obvious-the-case-for-independence-is-stronger/>

## **Political Setbacks**

---

### **Grayling accused of trying to hold Brexit ferry trial in private**

Chris Grayling has been accused of trying to conduct large parts of a trial over the £14m Brexit ferry fiasco in private, against the principle of open justice, the high court has heard. The transport secretary is being sued by Eurotunnel over the allegedly unlawful award of a government contract to Seaborne Freight, a company with no ships, and two other ferry companies, in a case due to start on Friday. Lawyers for Eurotunnel told the high court on Monday that the minister was trying to keep the majority of documents in relation to the contract out of the public domain. They said they did not know his reasons but argued that if Grayling was trying to avoid adverse publicity or embarrassment then this was not legally justifiable.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/25/grayling-accused-of-trying-to-hold-brexit-ferry-trial-in-private>

### **Former WTO boss: Brexiteers' vision makes 'no sense'**

Pascal Lamy claimed a no-deal Brexit would make “no sense” in a “world that is globalising and integrating”. He urged the British government to strike an agreement to ensure there is continuity beyond March 29th, contradicting the vision of Brexiteers like Farage and Rees-Mogg, who want to end up on WTO rules. Lamy told Euronews: “I know there’s a view on the Brexit side that they become independent, they regain control. “In a world which is globalising, integrating, I think it makes absolutely no sense. “What would be the sense of having a regulation for 60 million people when the world is moving to zones who have regulations for 500 million or 600 million people? It makes no sense.”

<https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/top-stories/pascal-lamy-from-world-trade-union-on-brexit-1-5904928>

**@tnewtondunn An extraordinary proposition from Theresa May to achieve Brexit on time - says she could try to pass a Withdrawal Agreement Bill through the Commons BEFORE the EU27 even formally sign off a new deal on March 22: “It is possible to do it either way”.**

An extraordinary proposition from Theresa May to achieve Brexit on time - says she could try to pass a Withdrawal Agreement Bill through the Commons BEFORE the EU27 even formally sign off a new deal on March 22: “It is possible to do it either way”.

<https://twitter.com/tnewtondunn/status/1100023600726331392>

### **No-deal hardship fund planned for surge in jobless**

Ministers are planning a “hardship fund” for Britons impoverished by a no-deal Brexit. A leaked document from the cabinet committee dedicated to preparing for a chaotic rupture with the European Union reveals the extraordinary scenarios being prepared for in Whitehall. Other measures under consideration include using “tax and benefits policy” to offset rises in the cost of living, protection for parts of the country “geographically vulnerable” to food shortages and sourcing alternative food for schools, prisons and hospitals. The plans were drawn up at a meeting this month of the EU exit and trade (preparedness) committee, which is chaired by Theresa May and attended by almost every cabinet minister. One of the “actions arising” circulated after the meeting says that “officials and ministers” in several government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions and the Treasury, will “work on the detail of a possible hardship fund”.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/no-deal-hardship-fund-planned-for-surge-in-jobless-sthj7g79g?shareToken=57100b6520e0d1459c5639706a15aed3>

### **Poll shows Labour fall as Independent Group rises**

Labour’s support has fallen below the combined total for the new Independent Group and the Liberal Democrats. A YouGov poll for The Times asked people how they would vote if they could support the Independent Group (TIG) in their constituency. The poll found the Tories on 36 per cent, down two points from last week and Labour on 23 per cent, down three points. TIG received a four-point boost, at 18 per cent, with the Lib Dems on 6 per cent, down one. The result means that TIG and the Lib



Dems, which support a second referendum, are on a combined 24 per cent, one point ahead of Labour, underlining the potential scale of the challenge to Labour from pro-referendum parties.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/poll-shows-labour-fall-as-independent-group-rises-8m62g6fh3>

### **Iceland PM warns over no-deal Brexit**

The prime minister of Iceland has warned that the UK will be in a "very difficult position" if it leaves the European Union without a deal. In an interview for BBC Scotland's new news programme, The Nine, Katrín Jakobsdóttir said a no-deal Brexit was "also a concern" for Iceland. She said this was because of close trading links between the two nations. Asked whether she thought Scotland could be independent, Ms Jakobsdóttir replied "absolutely". Although she said the decision was "not for me to take".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-47363132>

### **DWP minister urges people to stop claiming the benefit system causes suicides**

A Tory DWP minister has demanded people stop claiming the benefits system can be directly linked to suicides. Sarah Newton said MPs should be "careful" before making "allegations" about the regime - which includes fit-for-work tests, underpayments in error and cuts under Universal Credit . And she brushed off calls for an "investigation" into 20,000 people who died waiting to see if they were owed sickness benefit. The plea came as Ms Newton answered questions on a £1.7bn blunder that paid 210,000 people too little Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) as far back as 2011.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/dwp-minister-sarah-newton-urges-14051705>

### **Pundits were wrong to write-off the People's Vote campaign**

Not too long ago, commentators and pundits were gleefully writing eulogies for the People's Vote campaign. In early February, after the prime minister managed to fudge her way to a parliamentary majority (sort of), with the Labour party's continued intransigence in the face of member opinion to support a People's Vote and the clock continuing to run down - it was universally agreed that if there ever was a chance for a People's Vote, it was now gone. But - whisper it quietly - there is growing momentum for a People's Vote once again.

<https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/top-stories/the-peoples-vote-brexite-campaign-is-back-1-5906054>

### **@JolyonMaugham The nature of Labour's amendment - changes to the non-binding Political Declaration - suggests Labour might support the withdrawal agreement if its amendment is carried.**

The nature of Labour's amendment - changes to the non-binding Political Declaration - suggests Labour might support the withdrawal agreement if its amendment is carried. The amendment also hangs out to dry those who want the right to live and work and love across Europe.

<https://twitter.com/JolyonMaugham/status/1100092515418558465>

### **Labour Party Leader, Under Pressure, Backs a New Brexit Referendum**

Britain's opposition Labour Party said on Monday that it was prepared to support a second referendum on withdrawal from the European Union, a shift that could have significant ramifications for the fate of Brexit and for the country's future. After the resignations of nine Labour Party members last week, and amid the prospect of more, the party's leader, Jeremy Corbyn, dropped his longstanding resistance to a second vote on leaving the bloc. Getting an amendment for a new vote through Parliament any time soon is unlikely, but Mr. Corbyn's support for one will cheer pro-European Britons, who have been fighting to reverse the outcome of the 2016 referendum decision. Without the support of Labour, there is no chance of a second referendum ever being authorized by lawmakers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/world/europe/jeremy-corbyn-brexite-referendum.html>

### **Brexit: Guy Verhofstadt criticises Theresa May's 'reckless' decision to postpone**

### **meaningful vote on deal**

The European parliament's Brexit chief has criticised Theresa May for delaying a parliamentary vote on her deal, branding the decision "one of the most reckless" he had ever seen in his life. Guy Verhofstadt accused the prime minister of "kicking the can down the road" and adding to the "crippling uncertainty" for citizens and businesses. The prime minister announced over the weekend that she would not be holding a Commons vote this week, despite a looming deadline to ratify an agreement before the UK crashes out.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-vote-delay-theresa-may-commons-guy-verhofstadt-parliament-eu-a8795461.html>

### **Dead calm: Brexit not in top 10 of German businesses' priorities**

An Irish business delegation, led by former taoiseach Enda Kenny, had a rendezvous with this German reality at a recent breakfast in Berlin with Bundestag MPs. "They told us Brexit is not among their top 10 political concerns," said Ralf Lissek, chief executive of the German-Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce, who led the group. "I have the impression the visiting Irish were relieved to hear they weren't in the top five, but a little nervous to hear they weren't in the top 10."

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/dead-calm-brexit-not-in-top-10-of-german-businesses-priorities-1.3803856>

### **Will Theresa May ever give us a straight answer on Brexit?**

Before Theresa May's press conference in Sharm el Sheikh, a rumour went round that the Egyptian authorities would not permit any questions about Brexit. I don't know who started it. But it was very cruel of them to get our hopes up like that. As it turned out, journalists were free to ask Mrs May whatever they liked. Not that it mattered. I've said this so many times now that I'm in danger of becoming as repetitive as she is. But watching the Prime Minister field questions about Brexit is extraordinary. No matter what you ask her, she point-blank refuses to give a straight answer.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/02/25/will-theresa-may-ever-give-us-straight-answer-brexit/>

### **British MPs now have their chance to 'take back control' from Theresa May's hapless government**

With the Conservatives and Labour in disarray, let's hope The Independent Group shakes British politics to its core. The new group are united by moderate values. They think Brexit is a disaster and have called for another referendum. They think the leaders of their former parties are being manipulated by hardliners on the far right (Conservatives) or far left (Labour). They think British politics is broken and expect more MPs to join them.

<https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/british-mps-now-have-their-chance-to-take-back-control-from-theresa-may-s-hapless-government-1.829984>

### **UK faces chaotic Brexit or extension of article 50, says Donald Tusk**

Theresa May will not get her Brexit deal through the Commons, Donald Tusk has warned, leaving the UK with the option of "a chaotic Brexit" or an extension of its membership of the EU beyond 29 March. The European council president, to quell "speculation", disclosed that, during private talks with the prime minister at a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, he had walked through the legal process that would need to be followed to delay Brexit. Tusk said it was not the EU's "plan" to extend the two-year negotiation but that it was now evident to him that it was the "rational solution" in light of the prime minister's failure to corral a majority behind the deal.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/25/chaotic-brexit-or-extension-article-50-donald-tusk>

### **"Brexit Referendum Was Corruptly Won, But Result Stands Thanks To Loophole"**

"If the referendum had been legally binding, then the findings of the Electoral Commission would have rendered it invalid. But because it wasn't binding, we can be held to something that was corruptly delivered." according to lawyer Jessica Simor QC who took the government to court over

the matter

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/james-obrien/brexit-referendum-corruptly-won-but-result-stands/>

### **I'll stay beyond summer for Brexit stage two, says Theresa May**

"First of all, you are absolutely right that there is a second part of the negotiation in terms of the future economic relationship and the future security partnership. We have set out a clear framework for that and that is the basis on which those negotiations would go forward," she said. "But I was very clear in December with the Conservative Party that what I'm doing — my job — is not just about delivering Brexit. Actually, there's a domestic agenda that I'm delivering on, that reflects what I said on the doorstep of No 10 when I first became PM. That's why we've been making key decisions like the extra money for the NHS and the long-term plan for the NHS. There is still a domestic agenda that I want to get on with."

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/politics-i-ll-stay-beyond-summer-for-brexit-stage-two-says-theresa-may-7dcw3760>

*Additional sources: (The Sun)*

### **Digital gangsters threaten to kill democracy**

The main news of the past week was not the splintering of our calcified political system. It concerned attacks on it from outside. A devastating report from a Commons committee looking at disinformation highlighted the threat posed by unregulated political advertising. It lambasted the big tech companies as "digital gangsters" for their greedy collusion in this. Another report, by the Royal United Services Institute, showed how the Chinese authorities systematically control foreign academic and media discussion and turn economic ties to their political advantage. If you think you live in a free country, ask when your rulers last spoke out bluntly on topics such as Taiwan and Tibet. The combination of foreign interference and technological change threatens to overturn our political system. How can we have a fair election when unlimited money from murky sources — including foreign ones — can pay for secret messages that most voters never see? That is what Facebook enabled in the Brexit referendum. How can we deal sensibly with the world's second-biggest economy if our discussions and actions are constrained by greed for its money?

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/digital-gangsters-threaten-to-kill-democracy-ttds777jm>

### **The Brexit death spiral**

None of the defects in electoral regulation or the threats of disinformation and hostile campaigns (domestic and foreign) have been addressed. The DCMS report arrived with a whimper and nothing has been implemented that makes any of it better. Truth be told, the situation is worse now than it was in 2016. The reality is simply that Leave own the conversation on Facebook, where activism translates from electronic to the street, and they are punching well above their audience on Twitter too. For example, of 2.7 million monitored interactions across the country's most popular Facebook pages of all political flavours in the last week, the pro-Brexit lobby owned 76.45% of the conversation. And on Twitter, where Leave only really has a quarter of the total audience, it's still in charge of 39.38% of the interactions

<https://www.byline.com/column/67/article/2428>

## **Trade Deals/Negotiations**

---

### **UK to keep trade penalties post-Brexit**

"What's crucial is what's missing from the Government's announcement today," said Laura Cohen, chief executive of the British Ceramic Confederation. "We still do not know what they are going to do with those underlying, most favoured nation tariffs, onto which trade remedies are added. "If Government drops these to zero in a no-deal Brexit, then ceramic tiles and tableware, and many thousands of other goods manufactured in this country will be in jeopardy, because a flood of imports will cause untold damage to our domestic markets," she said. "Even a highly experienced

authority would struggle with the sheer volume and complexity of reviewing all the transitioned measures, implementation of the UK's new steel safeguards as well as taking on a brand new investigations into dumping and subsidies," said the Director General of UK Steel Gareth Stace. "UK steel producers are at risk of exposure to unfair trading practices whilst the fledgling Trade Remedies Authority wrestles with this mammoth task and plays catch-up with its EU counterpart," he said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47361334>

### **This Brexit trade bill threatens parliamentary sovereignty**

I am calling for parliament to have the right to set a thorough mandate to govern each trade negotiation, the right of the public to be consulted as part of setting that mandate, transparency in the negotiations, and parliamentary power to amend and reject trade deals. The government offers none of that. The trade bill currently making its way through parliament contains no provision for greater parliamentary involvement in trade agreements. In fact, it provides no formal obligation to even inform or consult parliament on negotiations. As with so many aspects of Brexit, it is a threat to our parliamentary sovereignty. The number of parliamentary defeats this government has faced in 2019 alone, not to mention the margins of defeat and its consistent attempts at undermining parliament have taken away its legitimacy to govern effectively.

<http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2019/02/25/this-brexit-trade-bill-threatens-parliamentary-sovereignty>