

News from the Brexit Cliff Edge

22nd Feb 2019

News Highlights

Welcome to the Brexit Cliff Edge

- Credit ratings agency Fitch has put the UK on negative ratings downgrade watch because of Brexit uncertainty. This will make its debt more expensive
- Poor areas of the UK, such as West Wales and Cornwall, which have benefited from European Regional Development Fund for infrastructure project investment, are worried about the lack of any information on the UK government's replacement funding
- The Royal College of Radiologists are concerned about how the NHS will maintain its supply of short-life radioactive isotopes, vital for cancer treatment. With no information on the matter, it fears it may have to make clinical decisions influenced by supply
- Tower Hamlets council put an advert for EU citizens to get registered to stay in the UK on the side of its rubbish collection trucks. The error was compounded as the picture featured an arrow pointing EU citizens towards the crusher
- Some UK pharmaceutical companies, medical hospitals and industry groups say it is impossible to prepare for a No Deal Brexit. They say it throws the continuation of important medical trials into question
- The Home Office has failed to properly collect fines imposed on hundreds of businesses who employed undocumented migrant workers
- Tory MP Chris Davies has been charged with submitting two fraudulent election expenses
- The UK diplomatic team has upset Bangladesh (stateless ISIS bride), Japan (haughty letter pushing them to agree a trade deal) and China (our defence secretary threatened to send a gunboat to the South China Sea). This willful clumsiness makes securing last-minute trade deals even harder
- The Independent Group's Anna Soubry gave an interview in which she said Theresa May has a real problems with immigrants
- Taxpayers will have to foot the bill for £310m in compensation to Windrush victims and their families, who were wrongly deported
- There were reports of up to 100 Conservatives ready to force a delay on Brexit if Theresa May fails to secure a deal
- The Independent Group said it would be interested in supporting Theresa May's deal, if she also committed to a referendum in which Remain was on the ballot paper as an option
- Jean-Claude Juncker confessed to feeling Brexit fatigue, as Theresa May and her team sought to get additional amendments to the political declaration

Jobs at Risk

Honda's 2018 briefing undermines claim plant closure not Brexit-related

A senior figure at Honda listed a catalogue of risks posed by Brexit at a briefing near its Swindon plant last year, fuelling doubts about the carmaker's insistence that Britain's withdrawal from the EU had nothing to do with the factory's closure. Multiple factors are understood to be behind the closure, including global market conditions, the shift to electric vehicles and a free-trade agreement with the EU that will allow Japanese carmakers to export cars tariff-free from 2027.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/21/honda-european-chief-outlined-no-deal-brexit-concerns-in-2018>

Brexit Job Loss Map maker

Someone has been mapping Brexit job losses... Not a pretty sight.

<https://www.easymapmaker.com/map/5411119ef29727d2711abc5d0c19b761>

Economic Impact

Fitch puts UK credit rating on negative watch

The UK faces a credit rating downgrade because of the mounting risk that it will leave the EU without a transition deal, according to a leading rating agency. Fitch has put the UK's double A credit rating on negative watch over the growing uncertainty over Brexit, a move that signals the increasing likelihood of a downgrade. There is "heightened uncertainty" over the outcome of the Brexit process, Fitch said, and an "increased risk of a disruptive no-deal Brexit" that the agency believes "would lead to substantial disruption to UK economic and trade prospects".

<https://www.ft.com/content/14622ec4-3562-11e9-bd3a-8b2a211d90d5>

Additional sources: (Reuters UK)

UK and Ireland retailers warn of 40% tariffs on food in no-deal Brexit

A no-deal Brexit could lead to tariffs of 40% or more being imposed on food such as beef and cheddar cheese, driving up prices in shops and squeezing household budgets across the UK and Ireland, retail organisations from both countries have warned. With mounting fears that the UK could leave the European Union without an agreement in 36 days' time, the British Retail Consortium (BRC), Northern Ireland Retail Consortium (NIRC) and Retail Ireland, issued a joint warning that this outcome could lead to delays at borders and shortages of fresh meat, fish, fruit and vegetables.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/feb/21/uk-and-ireland-retailers-warn-of-40-tariffs-on-food-in-no-deal-brexit>

Administrative Fall Out

The Home Office Is Still Owed Most Of The Fines It Has Issued To Employers Using Undocumented Migrants

At least half - and potentially more than two-thirds - of fines owed to the Home Office by employers using undocumented workers have gone unpaid in the last five financial years. Many of these employers have exploited undocumented workers as a way to pay far below the minimum wage. The introduction of more stringent fines was part of Theresa May's "hostile environment" strategy when she was home secretary.

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/emilydugan/home-office-hostile-immigration-employer-fines>

Some cancer treatment may be delayed post-Brexit

NHS trusts will have "no choice but to prioritise" which patients receive cancer treatment if a no-deal Brexit delays the import of radioactive isotopes, the Royal College of Radiologists has warned.

<https://www.hsj.co.uk/policy-and-regulation/some-cancer-treatment-may-be-delayed-post-brexit/7024457.article>

Remain or leave? Carmakers confront hard Brexit choices

"It would not be true to say that a hard Brexit automatically means the closure of plants in the United Kingdom, neither for us, nor for other manufacturers, but it would certainly mean they come under greater scrutiny," a car industry leader in the UK said. British workers would have to deliver productivity gains that offset tariffs and supply chain friction. Everting to a regime of cross-border tariffs and World Trade Organization rules, after decades of free trade, would force Aston and its suppliers to trace and document where all the parts in a vehicle come from, he told Reuters. "When you've got 10,000 parts on a car and then you've got all of the sub-parts and the sub-parts, you quickly get up to hundreds of thousands of parts. And do you honestly know where they've all come from? Often not," he said.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-autos-insight-idUKKCN1QA0NO>

London's Heathrow Airport could see trade boost in no-deal Brexit

London Heathrow Airport could be boosted by extra trade if Britain leaves the European Union without a deal and Britain's seaports and roads get clogged up with extra congestion, the airport's chief executive said on Thursday.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-heathrow-results/londons-heathrow-airport-could-see-trade-boost-in-no-deal-brex-it-UKKCN1QA1GH>

Bin lorries raising awareness of EU citizens' rights after Brexit tell them 'this is your home'

A London council has sparked debate over its ad campaign offering information to EU citizens on their rights after Brexit. Tower Hamlets is displaying posters on 11 bin lorries around the borough, signposting people to its website and encouraging them to "secure your right to stay here". The message read: "Are you one of the 41,000 EU citizens who live in Tower Hamlets? This is your home too." It was accompanied by an arrow pointing to the back of the lorry.

<https://news.sky.com/story/bin-lorries-raising-awareness-of-eu-citizens-rights-after-brex-it-tell-them-this-is-your-home-11643657>

Pay farmers to avoid cull of lambs after no-deal Brexit, union says

The National Farmers Union president, Minette Batters, questioned what would happen to British produce if no deal is agreed that allows goods to be accepted. "With 900 hours to go, it's unacceptable for government to leave British businesses having to take this gamble," she said. Nick von Westenholz, the director of EU and international trade at the NFU, said sheep farmers were particularly vulnerable because they rely heavily on exports to the EU that could be halted for months if the UK crashes out of the bloc on 29 March. "The negative impact on the sheep sector will be felt within weeks because of the time [of year]," he said. The EU has said it could take up to six months to authorise imports from UK food producers. The NFU says this would be a de facto trade embargo, leaving sheep farmers with no option but to slaughter surplus animals.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/20/farmers-lamb-culling-no-deal-brex-it-exports-union>

Scottish packaging firm Macfarlane Group makes Brexit plan

The boss of the UK's biggest protective packaging distributor has a "high degree of confidence" it could still serve customers after a no-deal Brexit. Peter Atkinson of Macfarlane Group said there would be difficulties if Britain crashed out of the EU, but added that contingency plans were in place. His comments came as the Glasgow-based firm reported a ninth year of successive growth.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-47306485>

Yes, there's Brexit. But the inaction on the fit-for-work scandal is shameless

"Fit-for-work tests", the linchpin of the austerity era's pernicious "welfare reforms". Introduced by New Labour, but accelerated dramatically by the coalition government, these assessments have falsely pushed disabled and severely ill people off benefits, and even towards suicide.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/21/brex-it-inaction-fit-work-scandal-shameless>

Are we stockpiling in case of a no-deal Brexit?

There are fears that a no-deal Brexit might disrupt supplies of food from abroad. So how many of us are stockpiling groceries ahead of the leave date? Here's what some are doing in the Yorkshire town of Baildon.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/business-47308935/are-we-stockpiling-in-case-of-a-no-deal-brex-it>

For the Dutch, Brexit is a mistake - and a big opportunity

An advert in the Netherlands features a hairy beast warning about the looming departure of Britain from the EU. Move over Project Fear, this is Project Fur: a campaign aimed at urging businesses to brace themselves for a no-deal Brexit. So what do the Dutch make of the big blue Brexit monster?

While the British media has been busy laughing at photos of the muppet-like creature straddling a desk as the Dutch foreign minister watches on, the truth is that this campaign has actually passed many people by. This is a shame: there are good reasons for Dutch folk to worry about the impact of an acrimonious Brexit. Such an outcome would be in no-one's interests. But just as British supporters of Brexit talk of it as an opportunity, so too do many people in the Netherlands - only from their point of view this will come at Britain's expense.

<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2019/02/for-the-dutch-brexit-is-a-mistake-and-a-big-opportunity/>

No-deal Brexit 'could disrupt London commuter trains'

Rail passengers commuting into London could have services disrupted by freight trains if a no-deal Brexit causes logjams at the Channel tunnel, it has emerged. Go-Ahead, the company behind the rail operator Southeastern, said it was working with the government to try to ensure commuters were not affected. But David Brown, the chief executive of Go-Ahead, which runs some of the biggest rail and bus networks in Britain, said there was a risk some passenger services could give way to goods. He also warned of a potential future shortage of bus drivers, revealing that job applications from Europe had dried up since the UK's EU referendum in 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/feb/21/no-deal-brexit-could-cause-staff-shortages-and-passenger-delays-warns-train-operator>

Medical industry sounds alarm on risks posed by no-deal Brexit

Some of the UK's biggest pharmaceutical companies, research hospitals and medical industry groups say it is now impossible for them to be prepared for a no deal Brexit, which would put the future of medical trials in doubt. They say leaving the EU at the end of next month without a deal would also potentially delaying life-saving breakthroughs in fields such as cancer care. A blizzard of no-deal notices have been sent to medical firms this week by the industry watchdog, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), with warnings that much of its important guidance and online services will not be available until the day of Brexit itself.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/02/21/medical-industry-sounds-alarm-risks-posed-no-deal-brexit/>

Aer Lingus given six months to fix Brexit EU ownership issue

The European Union has given Aer Lingus and two related airlines in Spain a six-month deadline, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, in which to restructure its shareholding and thus ensure it is eligible to continue operating as a European company. This is the result of Aer Lingus, Iberia and Vueling being owned by British holding company International Airlines Group (IAG). According to EU rules, only companies that are majority owned by EU shareholders are able to operate flights between member states. A no-deal Brexit raised the prospect of Aer Lingus, Iberia and Vueling being stripped of their EU flying rights.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/aer-lingus-given-six-months-to-fix-brexit-eu-ownership-issue-1.3800724>

Tourists face £52 visa for EU after Brexit as Spain blocks waiver

British tourists may have to pay to visit European countries after Brexit because of Spanish demands over the status of Gibraltar. Legislation being put in place to ensure Brits are able to travel visa-free within Europe after leaving the EU was derailed by Spain during talks in Brussels. The country was reluctantly backed by the other 26 member states when on Wednesday it re-ignited the argument over whether the British overseas territory should be described as a 'colony' in the EU's statute book.

<https://metro.co.uk/2019/02/21/tourists-face-52-visa-eu-brexit-spain-plans-block-waiver-8692507/>

Despite Brexit, London will remain the VC capital of Europe

Leaving the single market will have the least impact on the most ambitious startups. The EU's regulatory harmony has always been somewhat offset for startups by its linguistic and cultural

diversity. In any case, these companies place no geographic bounds on their aspirations. The UK's prosaic but fundamental strengths – a favourable time zone and the English language – will keep the country attractive as a springboard to launch a global company.

<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/brexit-london-venture-capital-startups>

On the rocks: Can the Scottish whisky industry survive Brexit?

The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) trade body was not unique among UK industry in supporting a Remain vote. Business hates uncertainty – and the European Union accounts for over 30 percent of overseas Scotch whisky sales. Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, after most people in England and Wales – unlike those in Scotland and Northern Ireland – voted to leave the bloc. If there is no deal agreed to govern that exit, then Britain is going to be trading with the EU and the rest of the world, on World Trade Organization (WTO) terms. "There is a risk of losing benefits, including lower tariffs, secured through the EU's bilateral trade deals with markets representing around 10% of Scotch exports," according to the SWA.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/rocks-scottish-whisky-industry-survive-brexit-190220174424197.html>

Remain or leave? Carmakers confront hard Brexit choices

Many auto companies – from luxury marques like Aston Martin to mass-market brands such as Vauxhall – are working on ways to survive after March 29. On the outskirts of London, workers at Vauxhall's operation in Luton are preparing to produce a new line of commercial vans following fresh investment from the brand's owner PSA which they are counting on to sustain over 1,000 jobs. While post-Brexit market conditions remain a big unknown, Vauxhall boss Stephen Norman told Reuters Britain's exit from the European Union could present an opportunity to increase the brand's market share. He is pursuing a marketing campaign to boost demand for the company's modestly priced cars and SUVs.

<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/remain-leave-carmakers-confront-hard-070443772.html>

First minister says Wales needs to be first in queue for post-Brexit relief

First Minister Mark Drakeford said Wales needed to be at the front of the queue for any post-Brexit economic relief. He was in Llandudno Junction on Thursday for a cabinet meeting at the Welsh Government offices. Asked what his plan B was if companies such as Toyota and Airbus UK were to relocate after Brexit, taking away thousands of direct and ancillary jobs from the area, he laid the blame squarely with the Westminster government.

<https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/first-minister-says-wales-needs-15865863>

No-deal Brexit could cause food prices to soar by 45%, retailers warn

Retailers have warned that a no-deal Brexit will lead to "unaffordable" price hikes on food and drink for customers in both the UK and Ireland as well as causing shortages of some everyday items. Leaders of retail bodies said reverting to World Trade Organisation tariffs could make the cost of making fresh food and drink available to consumers increase by as much as 45 per cent – which is likely to be passed on to customers. Food and drink production will be made more expensive due to a combination of higher tariffs and new regulatory checks, according to Aodhan Connolly, director of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, Thomas Burke, director of Retail Ireland and William Bain, the British Retail Consortium Europe and international policy adviser. The warning comes days after Birds Eye boss Wayne Hudson said food prices were likely to rise by up to 20 per cent "virtually immediately" due to new tariffs.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/brexit-no-deal-food-prices-tariffs-wto-uk-ireland-retail-a8789576.html>

Political Shenanigans

Group of 100 Conservative MPs ready to force Brexit delay if May's deal fails

Theresa May has been warned by a group of 100 moderate Tory MPs that they are prepared to rebel against the Government to force her to delay Brexit if she cannot reach a deal. The Brexit Delivery Group, which represents both Remain and Leave MPs, has called for a free vote next week on a backbench bid to take no deal off the table. Simon Hart and Andrew Percy, the leaders of the bloc, say in a letter leaked to The Daily Telegraph that "numerous" members of the group have become "deeply troubled" by the prospect of a no deal Brexit. The letter to Julian Smith, the chief whip, says: "The reputation for competence of both the party and the Government depends on our ability to deliver an orderly exit, in line with the existing timescale.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/02/21/brexit-latest-news-labour-tories-brace-walkouts-defectors-reshape/>

Could new group reshape political tribes?

Fears over Brexit and the party drifting to the right - and away from relevance - are held far beyond today's "three amigos", but by dozens of MPs privately, including ministers in the government. If, as is likely, more MPs move across, those private pleas to stay in the centre ground have more weight. Like Labour, the Tories have big questions they can't answer at the moment - profound quandaries that it's not clear their leaderships are ready, or perhaps even capable right now of meeting.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47309514>

UK's Jeremy Corbyn: Risk of no-deal Brexit 'very serious'

The leader of Britain's biggest opposition party warned on Thursday that there was a "very serious" risk that the country would crash out of the European Union without a deal. Following a "useful" meeting in Brussels with Michel Barnier, the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Corbyn said May was "trying to keep the threat of a no deal on the table" and accused her of "running down the clock" ahead of the Brexit deadline on March 29. The Labour Party was "determined" to remove the possibility of a no-deal exit, he said, adding that Barnier had conveyed the EU's own fears about the predicted economic damage such an outcome would entail for both sides.

<https://www.dw.com/en/uks-jeremy-corbyn-risk-of-no-deal-brexit-very-serious/a-47618553>

@SkyNewsPolitics "It is a complex and difficult question to answer at this stage".

"Did Barnier say it was possible to have an extension to #Article50?" asks @Stone_SkyNews. @jeremycorbyn responds with: "It is a complex and difficult question to answer at this stage".

<https://twitter.com/SkyNewsPolitics/status/1098572275647987712>

The real Brexit cliff edge is not on March 29th - it's July 1st

Here's the great secret truth about the Brexit cliff edge: It's not on March 29th. It's actually pretty easy to extend that deadline by a few months and there is something close to consensus in Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels that we'll have to. The real cliff edge is on July 1st, the day before the inaugural plenary session of the newly-elected European parliament. That's the dead zone. If you haven't taken part in the upcoming European elections, there's no way to extend the deadline any further. So something is becoming increasingly clear. If Labour really is committed to ruling out no-deal, if moderate Tory Cabinet ministers really mean it when they say they refuse to allow it to happen, they must support British participation. This is, by far, the most important aspect of the whole Brexit debate. And there is almost no mention of it at all.

<http://www.politics.co.uk/blogs/2019/02/21/the-real-brexit-cliff-edge-is-not-on-march-29th-it-s-july-1s>

Labour MP Jess Phillips: 'I feel closer to Luciana Berger [than Jeremy Corbyn] without any shadow of a doubt'

Labour MP Jess Phillips - who has said she found it hard to disagree with her former colleagues who are part of the Independent Group - spoke to Channel 4 News and they asked her whether she was minded to join them.

<https://www.channel4.com/news/labour-mp-jess-phillips-i-feel-closer-to-luciana-berger-than-jeremy-corbyn-without-any-shadow-of-a-doubt>

Labour must take on the splitters by finally backing a people's vote

From the perspective of the anti-Brexit movement, the Labour split does not change the bottom line. At some point in the process, Labour needs to whip in favour of a public vote and, if there is not a general election in the meantime, enough Tories need to join them to pass the motion. The damaging thing is the bigger process: the crude attempt by Chuka Ummuna and others to cash in their role in the anti-Brexit movement to lend credibility to a New Labour project which has run out of its own ideas.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/20/labour-splitters-backing-peoples-vote-independent-group-anti-brexit-movement?fbclid=IwAR3DKMNZkx9Tk34wt-wKsOr1OGx9TPIVI0B0DNnGbZPTi35aTJB4n0nR9T0>

Theresa May fights Remainer rebels as EU departure set to be delayed up to nine months

Cabinet ministers have told Theresa May she must agree to delay Brexit if there is no EU deal to halt their Commons rebellion next week. Four of the PM's top table confronted her during a No10 meeting on Monday to insist she must take No Deal off the table. Amber Rudd, David Gauke, Greg Clark and David Mundell named a new pledge from Mrs May to extend Article 50 talks as their price not to side with backbench rebels during a new showdown with MPs in seven days time. If the PM refuses, the senior ministers insisted they and 20 other members of the Government would press on with their vow to back Labour MP Yvette Cooper and Tory grandee Sir Oliver Letwin's plan for Parliament to seize control of the Brexit process.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/brexit/8269759/brexit-news-latest-theresa-may-eu-exit-delayed/>

Tory MP Phillip Lee causes an argument on BBC Politics Live show after calling Brexit a 'turd'

Conservative MP Phillip Lee sparked a row during the BBC Politics Live show on Wednesday after he branded Brexit a "turd" during a heated discussion. The Tory MP for Bracknell was discussing the latest defections of his colleagues Anna Soubry, Heidi Allen and Sarah Wollaston to the centrist The Independent Group parliamentary bloc that has taken shape this week. While he said he did not feel it was the time to join them, he took issue with the Conservatives embrace of Brexit since the 2016 vote.

<https://inews.co.uk/news/tory-mp-phillip-lee-brexit-turd-bbc-politics-live/>

Theresa May must rule out catastrophic no-deal Brexit at all costs

Anybody claiming a no-deal Brexit would be anything other than a catastrophe is either an idiot or a liar. It's a simple fact that crashing out of the EU without a deal would involve an economic shock that would be devastating for hundreds of thousands of people across the UK. This truth was driven home in a stark parliamentary statement by Scottish Constitutional Relations Secretary Mike Russell yesterday. The SNP minister revealed that official Scottish Government estimates suggest 100,000 jobs would be lost in the aftermath of a no-deal Brexit.

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-must-rule-out-catastrophic-14023120>

Brexit: Theresa May eyes potential route out of negotiation deadlock in Brussels

The outline of a potential compromise deal on Brexit has begun to emerge in Brussels with both sides now working towards a new route out of the deadlock. EU diplomats confirmed they were looking at a new kind of legal instrument to sit alongside the existing withdrawal agreement, giving clarity over the temporary nature of the Irish backstop so hated by Tory backbenchers. They were in meetings with the UK's attorney general Geoffrey Cox, who has already done groundwork on similar instruments before heading to Brussels for meetings alongside Brexit secretary Stephen Barclay.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-deal-latest-theresa-may-negotiations-brussels-eu-stephen-barclay-a8790816.html>

Brexit: No deal threat focusing minds, says Hammond

The threat of a no-deal Brexit is "focusing minds" and encouraging compromise, the chancellor has

said. Philip Hammond said the government was "determined to get a deal" before leaving the EU on 29 March but a "very bad" no deal outcome remained possible. The government said talks on Thursday were "productive" and would "continue urgently at a technical level". Jeremy Corbyn, who met EU negotiator Michel Barnier earlier, again accused the PM of "running down the clock".

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47316895>

Corbyn in Brussels to break Brexit deadlock - as Juncker declares his 'Brexit fatigue'

We don't need more time - we need decisions from the British Parliament - this from the EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who's just been holding talks with the Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay - the mood in Brussels growing distinctly gloomier, about the prospects of No Deal. Even the European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker declared he had "Brexit fatigue".

<https://www.channel4.com/news/corbyn-in-brussels-to-break-brexit-deadlock-as-juncker-declares-his-brexit-fatigue>

Additional sources: (Cornwall's Pirate FM)

Amendment to May's Brexit deal could protect UK and EU citizens' rights

It's just over a month before the UK is set to leave the European Union on March 29, and the risk of a no deal exit is rising with every day that passes. In this scenario, British citizens in the EU and EU citizens in the UK could lose their rights

<https://www.euronews.com/2019/02/21/amendment-to-may-s-brexit-deal-could-protect-uk-and-eu-citizens-rights>

Newly-partnered Fianna Fail and SDLP release joint statement on Brexit

The SDLP and Fianna Fail have issued a joint statement urging pro-remain parties across Ireland to form an alliance. The statement, which was issued by party leaders Colum Eastwood and Micheal Martin, sets out five core principles for parties across the island to agree on, in order to counteract the consequences of Brexit.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/newly-partnered-fianna-fail-sdip-201129117.html>

David Mundell: SNP wants No Deal Brexit to break-up UK

The SNP is "contriving" to bring about a No Deal Brexit because it will hasten the demise of the United Kingdom, Scottish Secretary David Mundell has claimed. And he indicated that he is ready to back moves to remove control of the Brexit process from the Government and return it to the Commons to avoid a "No Deal" scenario .

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/david-mundell-snp-wants-no-deal-brexit-to-break-up-uk-1-4876823>

Exclusive: The Independent Group Could Prop Up Theresa May's Government In Return For A Referendum On Her Deal

The Independent Group of Labour and Tory defectors could prop up Theresa May's government in a confidence and supply arrangement, a leading member has said. This would include voting for any Brexit deal, if the prime minister put it to the public in a referendum. Gavin Shuker told HuffPost UK's Commons People podcast it would be "in the national interest" to provide stability through any public vote, which could take a year to arrange. The group first made the offer in a meeting with the PM's de facto deputy, David Lidington, last month.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-independent-group-offers-to-prop-up-theresa-mays-government-in-return-for-a-referendum-on-her-deal_uk_5c6ec007e4b0e2f4d8a379b3

Political Setbacks

We've upset Japan, China and Bangladesh this week alone - post-Brexit Britain won't have any trade links at this rate

One of the many unintended consequences of Brexit is that "Global Britain" seems curiously friendless. We have proved remarkably inept at "taking back control" of our foreign policy, we are losing friends we need diplomatically every day. Telling Bangladesh to take our now 'stateless ISIS bride' - sending haughty letters to Japan they need to urgently agree a trade treaty with us - our

defence secretary threatening to send a warship into China's backyard and then we ask them for a trade deal.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-trade-deal-eu-japan-china-bangladesh-shamima-begum-isis-a8790521.html>

No-deal Brexit threatens to push Ireland into budgetary deficit

Ireland's deputy premier said the economy would be affected if the UK crashes out of the EU. A no-deal Brexit threatens to push Ireland into a budgetary deficit, Ireland's deputy premier has warned. Simon Coveney said the economy would be impacted if ...

<https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/uk-news/2019/02/21/no-deal-brexit-threatens-to-push-ireland-into-budgetary-deficit/>

Jeremy Corbyn pushes Labour's Brexit blueprint in Brussels

After his meetings with EU officials in Brussels on Thursday, the Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn, and those around him, seem more confident than ever that their vision of Brexit will, somehow, become reality. Despite not actually being in the negotiation seat or in power. Sources close to the talks between Mr Corbyn and Michel Barnier say the EU's chief negotiator was sympathetic to Labour's ideas of membership of a customs union and a closer alignment with the single market. Speak to EU diplomats and officials in Brussels privately and they have always seen the Labour plans as more favourable.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2019-02-21/jeremy-corbyn-pushes-labours-brexit-blueprint-in-brussels/>

Not there yet but closer: Britain and EU haggle over Brexit compromise

May's finance minister, Philip Hammond, raised hopes that a revised deal was on the cards by saying lawmakers could get an opportunity as early as next week to vote on a revised deal. But within hours of his comments, a British government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, played down the likelihood of a deal within days.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-vote/not-there-yet-but-closer-britain-and-eu-haggle-over-brexit-compromise-idUKKCN1QA0Q4?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

Theresa May reaches out to Remainer rebels amid quit rumours

Theresa May has held meetings with leading Tory Remainers, amid speculation about further defections. Justine Greening and Phillip Lee say Mrs May has ignored requests from pro-EU Tory MPs in favour of Brexiteers. The pair had separate meetings with the PM in Downing Street. Meanwhile, one ex-Labour member of the new Independent Group of MPs has said it could help keep Mrs May in power on condition that she agreed to another EU referendum with Remain as an option.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-47321482>

Delay to tax havens' public registers 'risks national security'

The UK government is undermining national security by delaying the introduction of publicly available share ownership registers in Britain's major tax havens such as the British Virgin Islands, the foreign affairs select committee has said. During a general inquiry into the relationship between the UK and its overseas territories, the MPs on the committee discovered that the Foreign Office planned to delay the introduction of publicly available beneficial share ownership registers until 2023, three years after the deadline MPs believed they had set. Public registers are seen as critical by campaigners for cracking down on money laundering, corruption and tax evasion, including by leaders of authoritarian governments.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/21/delay-to-tax-havens-public-registers-risks-national-security>

Tory MP defector predicts cabinet resignations over no-deal Brexit

Theresa May tried on Thursday to prevent further Europhile Tory MPs from resigning by promising that her UK government would occupy the political centre ground. Justine Greening and Philip Lee,

two Tory MPs who are seen as among the most likely to join the new Independent Group in the House of Commons, were both invited to meet Mrs May at Downing Street. Hours earlier Ms Greening said she would resign from the Conservative party if the government sought to take Britain out of the EU without a deal

<https://www.ft.com/content/51712a20-35b9-11e9-bb0c-42459962a812>

Scotland Brexit: David Mundell 'will not quit Conservative Party'

The Scottish secretary has said he is determined to stop a no-deal Brexit, but has no intention of leaving the Conservative Party. Speaking at an event in Edinburgh, David Mundell said leaving the EU without a deal could cause "chaos and disruption in our economy". He said he was not surprised that three pro-Remain Tory MPs had quit the party to join the new Independent Group. But he said he would "most certainly not" be joining them.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-47321671>

Theresa May is lying to get her Brexit deal through - even if that means thousands more people losing their jobs

The withdrawal agreement, widely known as "May's deal", clearly sets out the objective of leaving both the customs union and the single market. Leaving them both is part of the prime minister's many red lines. Not only are May's claims on the political declaration false, they are an attempt to obscure the decisive difference between her deal and Corbyn's policy. Corbyn is demanding that our economy is in a customs union with the closest possible relationship with the single market. The prime minister is willing to destroy tens of thousands of jobs and lower living standards as workers at Nissan, Ford and Honda are finding out. And the distortion of the truth is part and parcel of that plan.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-deal-theresa-may-eu-vote-commons-customs-union-labour-corbyn-a8789861.html>

John Humphrys SHOCKED by Philip Hammond's 'HIGH RISK' Brexit admission

BBC Today programme host John Humphrys was shocked by Philip Hammond's Brexit admission as the Chancellor revealed the UK Government may have never asked the EU whether they would offer Britain an extension of Article 50.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1090383/BBC-news-Brexit-Article-50-extension-Philip-Hammond-John-Humphrys>

There's only one way out of this Brexit nightmare - revoke Article 50

Brexit was a mutiny. Like all mutinies, it was driven by anger at authority rather than by a strategy for the future. To date, the consequences have been to deepen polarisation, but triumphant victory for either side is not the way forward. That there is no majority for any of the current options is entirely understandable: they are all awful. We can only break the polarisation with a new strategy. The Brexit mutiny should have been a wake-up call. Instead, the elite are angry that the mutiny was not suppressed, while the mutineers have become ever more distrustful. There is a way out of this nightmare. Revoke Article 50

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/02/theres-only-one-way-out-of-this-brexit-nightmare-revoke-article-50/>

No-deal Brexit might see Justine Greening quit Conservatives

Justine Greening has indicated she would leave the Conservative Party if the Government backed a no-deal Brexit. "I don't think I would be able to stay part of a party that was simply a Brexit party that had crashed us out of the European Union," the former education secretary said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-47321901/no-deal-brexit-might-see-justine-greening-quit-conservatives>

Brexit became inevitable while we were all looking the other way

When historians come to write the story of Brexit, where will their account begin? The year it all started to go wrong for David Cameron was 2012 - first Greece teetered on default and the EU took

a highly publicized austerity stance. This threw the Euro into crisis and in turn the political project went into the mixer

<https://news.sky.com/story/brexit-became-inevitable-while-we-were-all-looking-the-other-way-11614522>

Tories pushed close to breaking point after three Brexit-hating MPs defect and join Independent Group

Theresa May's Tory party was pushed close to breaking point on Wednesday as three prominent MPs walked out to join the new Independent Group. Former Cabinet minister Anna Soubry, Commons Health Committee chair Sarah Wollaston and Heidi Allen stunned Westminster with the defection.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8473872/tories-breaking-point-mps-defect-independent-group/>

Theresa May trolled in Brussels by anti-Brexit group

Just over 3 kilometers away from the Commission's Berlaymont building, a giant electronic billboard in Brussels' Place De Brouckère shows one of May's tweets from April 2016. It says: "I believe it is clearly in our national interest to remain a member of the European Union." The billboard is the work of Led By Donkeys, an anti-Brexit group that posts, according to its Twitter bio, "the Brexit predictions of our leaders, rendered as tweets then put on massive billboards."

<https://www.politico.eu/article/theresa-may-trolled-in-brussels-by-anti-brexit-group/>

Theresa May faces ministerial revolt over no-deal Brexit

Theresa May is facing the most serious cabinet revolt of her premiership next week, with as many as 25 members of the government ready to vote for a Brexit delay unless she rules out "no deal" - in a move that will challenge her to sack them. Rebel Conservatives believe there are now enough MPs across the House of Commons to pass an amendment that would require May to extend article 50 rather than allow the UK to leave without a deal.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/21/theresa-may-faces-ministerial-revolt-over-no-deal-brexit>

Taxpayers face having to cough up £310 MILLION for the Home Office's Windrush scandal

Taxpayers face a staggering £310 MILLION bill from the Windrush scandal, the Sun can reveal. Home Secretary Sajid Javid has told Cabinet colleagues that a compensation fund may cost the extraordinary sum. And he is warning the bill is so high, the Home Office will struggle to even launch the fund without extra cash from the Treasury. One Cabinet source told The Sun: "Saj is saying it's unaffordable and that the Home Office budget needs another £150 million." It's the first time the Government has put a figure on the likely redress for thousands of Commonwealth citizens caught up in the scandal - which erupted almost exactly one year ago.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8483058/windrush-310-million-home-office/>

EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker 'not optimistic' about avoiding no-deal Brexit

The European Commission president lamented that the two sides were unlikely to reach a deal MPs will be willing to support. And he warned that a no-deal departure from the bloc would have "terrible economic and social consequences, both in Britain and on the continent".

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/foreign-affairs/brexit/news/102006/eu-chief-jean-claude-juncker-not-optimistic-about>

From Europe, Brexit is like 'watching a car crash in slow motion'

Europeans in Brussels, the unofficial capital of the E.U., have some choice words to describe Britain's attempt to leave the 28-country bloc. "Horrible," "chaotic" and "frustrating" are just a few of them. There are just 36 days left until Brexit, and lawmakers have been unable to agree on how it will leave and what the future relationship will look like. "It's like watching a car crash in slow motion and you can't do anything to stop it," said Jess Fitch, who was born and raised in Belgium to British parents and is a U.K. national.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/brexit-referendum/europe-brexit-watching-car-crash-slow-motion-n972966>

Chris Davies: Tory MP charged with forgery over his expenses claims

A Tory MP has been charged with forgery over claims he falsified documents for his Parliamentary expenses. Chris Davies, 51, will face court next month charged with three alleged offences dating back to early 2016. The Crown Prosecution Service said today they brought the criminal charges after reviewing allegations that Mr Davies "falsified two invoices in support of Parliamentary expenses claims." The MP has represented Brecon and Radnorshire since 2015 and was made a government aide to the Wales Office in January 2018.

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/breaking-chris-davies-tory-mp-14031134>

Additional sources: (The Sun)

Ex-Tory MP Anna Soubry Claims Theresa May Has 'A Problem With Immigration'

Ex-Tory MP Anna Soubry has claimed Theresa May has a "problem with immigration" on the same day she decided to quit the Tories to join parliament's new Independent Group. Soubry, who announced her resignation on Wednesday over the government's stance on Brexit, told BBC Newsnight that the prime minister would not agree to the single market "because of the free movement of people". Soubry added: "And I think what's really worried me about Theresa, and she has history in the Home Office that supports this - because I'm an old barrister, I look at the evidence - and I think she's got a problem with immigration. I really, honestly do."

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ex-tory-mp-anna-soubry-says-theresa-may-has-a-problem-with-immigration_uk_5c6da7f4e4b0e2f4d8a2172a?ncid=other_twitter_coo9wqtham&utm_campaign=share_twitter

Labour reports former MP Joan Ryan over alleged data breach

Labour has reported its former MP Joan Ryan to the Information Commissioner's Office, though she strongly denies accessing party systems to contact members after resigning from the party on Tuesday to join the breakaway Independent Group. It is understood the party has informed the commissioner about the alleged breach and that it intends to submit a full report. Suspicions about the breach prompted party officials to shut down its key canvassing software.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/21/labour-reports-former-mp-joan-ryan-over-alleged-data-breach>

Trade Deals/Negotiations

Trade pact with Japan ruled out by Brexit deadline

The government has admitted it has run out of time to roll over existing trade pacts with Japan and Turkey in the event of a no-deal Brexit. A document released on Thursday by the Department for Trade showed it was seeking to continue deals with 40 trading partners currently covered by EU membership, accounting for 11% of all UK trade. But it confirmed that in the case of Japan - whose trade pact with the EU only came into force this month - "it is unlikely that we will reach an agreement prior to exit day".

<https://news.sky.com/story/trade-pact-with-japan-ruled-out-by-brexit-deadline-11643831>

Additional sources: (BBC) (Financial Times) (Evening Standard)

We cannot allow Liam Fox's post-Brexit trade plans to go unscrutinised

The international trade secretary, Liam Fox, is using the opportunity of the Parliamentary recess to avoid proper scrutiny of plans that threaten our rights, our environment and our democracy. He tabled a general debate on post-Brexit trade agreements with the US, Australia, New Zealand and the Trans-Pacific Partnership for Thursday. And he is expected to launch negotiations soon after the debate - with no chance for parliament to stop him. The government is planning to include investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms in future trade deals. ISDS clauses let foreign investors sue national governments for introducing policies that harm their profits.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/21/liam-fox-post-brexit-trade-plan-go-unscrutinised>

Britain threatens to favour Brazilian beef over Irish as new trade war looms

Britain has upped the ante in the battle over the Brexit backstop, by threatening to favour Brazilian beef over Irish using a system of tariffs and quotas. The British plan, which echoes tactics used against the government of Eamon de Valera during the Anglo-Irish trade war of the 1930s, aims to allow beef-producing countries like Brazil to dodge the brunt of the new import taxes, or tariffs, after Brexit. It will mean a huge quantity of low-priced Brazilian beef being pushed into the UK market, with quality Irish beef being priced out.

<https://www.independent.ie/business/farming/news/farming-news/britain-threatens-to-favour-brazilian-beef-over-irish-as-new-trade-war-looms-37837844.html>

EU Funding Benefits

Life After Brexit: Sustainability And The European Regional Development Fund

Responsible for balanced development across the European Union, the ERDF has funded a large chunk of infrastructure projects and services in remote regions of the UK. The funding was particularly important in West Wales and Cornwall, the two poorest regions in Northern Europe. With Brexit fast approaching, areas relying on the ERDF are growing increasingly worried about the lack of information regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) the government has set up to replace it.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesellsmoor/2019/02/21/life-after-brexit-sustainability-and-the-european-regional-development-fund/>