

May Day, May Day: Gove insists on no extension despite growing incredulity

The government claims that sticking to the current Brexit deadline is 'entirely possible'. But neither time nor the COVID-19 pandemic is on its side. Ros Taylor and Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz (LSE) round up this week's developments.



The UK government insists that trade talks with the EU, and the transition period, will end on 31 December 2020. This will provide 'certainty' for business at a time of enormous uncertainty. Michael Gove even went so far as to argue that the COVID-19 pandemic will '[concentrate the minds](#)' of European negotiators ('delusional', [says](#) the BBC's Katya Adler): he argued that concluding the negotiations on schedule is '[entirely possible](#)'.

At the same time, the European Commission warns that even if the talks are successful, "[barriers to trade and cross-border exchanges that do not exist today](#)" will become a reality in 2021.

What would be the consequences of an extension? The [Commons Library](#) has done the legwork. Best for Britain makes the case for it in a [report](#).

Alan Beattie of the FT [says](#) the government's current line is 'bonkers', but:

'There's a far darker view, that the government is betting the public won't be able to tell the virus shock from the Brexit shock. It would be a savagely cynical strategy, but one definitely beneath Johnson's government? Probably not.'

The Specialised Committee responsible for implementing the Protocol on Northern Ireland and Ireland meets for the first time today. LSE Brexit contributors Katy Hayward and David Phinnemore write in the [Irish Times](#) that "[it is Northern Ireland's best hope of having some means of informing \(if not shaping\) the EU-level decisions that it will have to abide by](#)" because of its unique post-Brexit status. Yet the UK is still declining the EU's request for [an office in Belfast](#) to oversee the implementation of the Brexit deal. Time is running short:

BREAKING: the EU believes IT systems and databases for customs checks and controls need to be in place in Northern Ireland by June 1 in order for the Irish Protocol to be properly implemented, according to a nine-page note circulated to member states, and seen by [@rtenews](#)

— Tony Connelly (@tconnellyRTE) [April 30, 2020](#)

The CBI says companies are starting to worry about Brexit again. Nicole Sykes has intelligence on the decisions they're taking:

Brexit has started to be A Thing again. Which is weird. But I'm told it's my job to... you know... engage with it. So. Storytime.

Companies have obviously been dealing with the much bigger fire that is a global pandemic and the many resulting crises.
(1/something)

— Nicole Sykes (@NicoleSykes_) [May 1, 2020](#)

On LSE Brexit

In the second post of our series on what's going wrong at the WTO, Dan Power and Mikael Hemlin explain why it [struggles to settle disputes](#).

Nadine El-Enany argues Brexit is a nostalgic, inward-looking project:

Britain's profound colonial amnesia and imperial ambition now see it making a drastic manoeuvre away from the EU (...) a post-Brexit Britain promises to be a dangerous place for racialised people and those without a secure status.

[Europe's colonial embrace and the Brexit nostalgia for empire are two sides of the same coin](#)

Meanwhile, people continue to 'miss Brexit'...

I miss Brexit, can we talk about Brexit again instead? Or pets, I like tweets with pets. Here's my cat snoozing, what an angel 🐱🐱 [#twitterpets](#) [#goawayvirus](#) [pic.twitter.com/AWnEez1ONk](#)

— Emma Maloy (@EmmaMaloy) [April 28, 2020](#)

This post represents the views of the authors and not those of the Brexit blog, nor LSE.

Would you like to receive a weekly update on Brexit-related news from the LSE? [Subscribe to our email](#).