

Text of the True Brexit elf

Do you believe in Brexit?

Fourth upon a time the Brexit elf went in search of the true Brexit. He had been over the moon all those years ago when the British people had voted to leave the EU. He looked forward to an early and complete departure. He expected the creation of a land of freedom. He looked forward to wise government from a newly independent and powerful Parliament. He knew the British people thought votes mattered. It never occurred to him and his friends that many of the Remainers in powerful positions would try to stop the will of the people.

He had been over the moon for a second time when in a wet and cold December in 2019 the people once again made clear they meant it. They told their wicked old Parliament that had fought them and tried to block Brexit that they really meant it. They voted again to get Brexit done. They said to the Remain Parliamentarians "You sit on a throne of lies". We are taking many of you off the throne, replacing you with those who will implement our vision.

After that election some things did change. The Leader of the Opposition who had fought pugnaciously against Brexit in the old Parliament, said he now accepted it. It still did not stop him taking the EU's side in any negotiation, and he still wants to tie us in to most of what we left.

After more wrangling and disagreeable negotiations with a rattled EU, the elf was over the moon again in January 2021. The UK had eventually left the EU. The people were free at last. The Parliament and government once again after fifty years of colonial status could decide on laws and taxes, budgets and tasks, responding to the people.

So why, one Christmas later, did the Brexit elf feel he had once again to travel the dark and largely empty covid cleared corridors of Whitehall in search of the true Brexit? The problem was that whilst we had left the EU, practically every EU law remained in place. Despite departing, the EU 20% VAT tax was still on almost everything the EU had placed it on. We had the freedom to set up Freeports, but they still had not come to pass. We should take control of our fishery, yet somehow it was still not in our grasp. We could replace the Common Agricultural Policy, yet much of it remained and some were unhappy with the sketched replacement which did not seem to help UK farmers.

Our Brexit elf as always was positive, cheery and determined to see it through. He was sure there was a true Brexit that would be good news, and was equally sure we still did not have it. So he decided to start at the

Cabinet office where much of the Brexit negotiating was conducted.

He politely introduced himself to the Chancellor of the Duchy, a reassuringly old title that linked today to an age when our government was independent. He asked the Chancellor if he believed in Brexit. Of course, said the Chancellor. Like you I voted for it. I had to be brave to do that as the government I supported at the time did not want it. Reassured, the elf asked why it was the government had still not removed any of the old EU laws. After all, he pointed out, there were plenty of such laws we had opposed or criticised at the time they were placed upon us. When would they go or be improved?

Well said the Chancellor, it's not that easy. Of course we are committed to tidying up, repealing a bit here and amending a bit there. We are finding it very difficult to get agreement. Lots of officials tell us we should not deviate too far. They point out business gets along with it all now it's embedded even if they didn't like it at the time. I think they are worried by the way whatever we do if we take the EU's view of the Northern Ireland Protocol all the EU laws will still apply there.

So, said the elf, when can I spread some Brexit cheer by singing aloud for all to hear that EU laws are a changing? Well, said the Chancellor, we are working on it. Watch out for any consultations we might announce, as we will want to take it gently.

A bit dispirited, the Elf decided to take himself to the Treasury. It's not normally the place you go to raise your sugar levels, but its boss is a well known Brexit voter who surely will want to implement the true Brexit. The Elf asked him why the UK economy was still being run under a version of the old Maastricht austerity rules. No, said the other Chancellor, that surely was not true. We now had a shiny new economic framework suited to the UK. In that case said the Elf, who knew a thing or two about economics, why are you still reporting UK figures against the Maastricht Treaty state debt and deficit requirements. Oh that must be a mistake came the reply. We will stop that. Even if you do said the Elf, you still have as rules the need to get the deficit down to below 3% just like the EU, and the need to get state debt falling as a percentage of GDP, just like the EU control. Oh, said the Chancellor, that is just a coincidence. This is now a UK policy. Well said the elf, I would like us to have a pro growth policy and a counter inflation policy, not a spending cuts and tax rises policy. The Chancellor was a busy man and ran out of time to pursue all this. The Elf had wanted to ask him why he hadn't even taken VAT off green products, but the meeting was over.

The Elf just liked to smile and get on with things. So he went to

the Environment and Agriculture department, where there could be so many Brexit wins. He asked the Environment Secretary if he believed in the true Brexit. Yes of course, he beamed. He had been a leading Brexit supporter. So encouraged he asked when would we have full control of our fishing grounds. He was told that was still in transition, but the plan was to make them ours in due course. He asked why we had given so many licences to French boats to fish in our waters and was told that was to get on well with the neighbours. The Elf asked why the French were not then happy with us, but there was no reply. He asked why we had not banned the very damaging super trawlers, all foreign, of over 100m length which pillaged our stocks and damaged our marine environment. There was no clear response. He asked why the replacement for the Common Agriculture Policy mainly would give money to farmers to stop farming and turn their land over to wilderness. What is more vulnerable than a peach asked the Elf? Or an English apple? Wasn't that just like the EU grant scheme to get us to grub our orchards so we imported apples from the continent? How did that help the world environment, and why did we want to destroy our own industry? Again he did not understand the reasons which were all about public goods and seemed very abstract.

Let down again the Elf took himself off to the Foreign Office. He was worried here, because the Foreign Secretary had voted for Remain. She immediately sought to reassure him that she had seen the light and like him wanted the true Brexit. However, it soon became clear that although she was Foreign Secretary she did not seem to handle the crucial talks with the EU or with France and could not help bring about his vision.

Back to reality he took himself to the Northern Ireland department. The Secretary of State told him he believed in the true Brexit, though he had not at the time of the referendum. The Elf wanted to know why Brexit did not extend to Northern Ireland and why the Protocol was causing so much angst. Well said the Secretary it is very complex. I tend to leave sorting it all out to Lord Frost who tells me he is working on it. The Elf painted a picture of a butterfly in the meeting as it wasn't going anywhere.

He decided to make one last call, on Business and Energy. Surely here there would be buzzing anticipation of a better future as they used the new freedoms to advance UK prosperity. After all there had been a great success for the UK developing its own vaccine for the virus when the EU's common system failed to build one. So he asked the Business Secretary when the UK was going to be self sufficient in energy once again. He was told that would not happen, as they intended to rely more and more on imports through pipes and cables to the continent as part of their domestic net zero policy. Far better the CO2 should be generated somewhere else.

By this time he was a very angry elf. Just as even he was losing his smile and his belief in the true Brexit the British people spoke to him. Cheer up, young elf, they said. You are right. Brexit teems with opportunities. We will tell Whitehall again that is what they have to do. We will make them find the true spirit of Brexit so you can smile and sing about it to your heart's content.

Only a bad Santa tells you Remain were right all along. We know they are wrong, and we will make sure all those departments come to help. If they don't, we will vote again to make our intentions clear. Does someone need a hug? Brexit is about cheer and optimism, to cast aside the dour grey commands of the old remain establishment. We will win our freedom.

[Christmas story The true Brexit elf](#)

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John Redwood won a free place at Kent College, Canterbury, and graduated from Magdalen College Oxford. He is a Distinguished fellow of All Souls, Oxford.

[My Written Question asking the Minister if he will publish the economic forecasts from the latest Plan B restrictions](#)

Question:

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish forecasts of the economic impact of the covid-19 restrictions announced on 8 December 2021. (91823)

Tabled on: 13 December 2021

Answer:

John Glen:

On 8 December, the government implemented its Plan B response to managing Covid-19. This was in response to the risks posed by the Omicron variant. The government set out the economic impacts of Plan B in its Autumn and Winter Plan, published in September 2021. Plan B has been designed to help control the spread of the virus while avoiding unduly damaging economic and social restrictions. A full assessment of the measures can be found in the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-autumn-and-winter-plan-2021>

HM Treasury does not prepare formal economic forecasts for the UK economy, which are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). HM Treasury will continue to conduct macroeconomic analysis to monitor the impacts on the economy from the implementation of Plan B measures.

The answer was submitted on 16 Dec 2021 at 13:56.

[What happened to the Nightingales?](#)

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what happened to the beds and medical equipment from the Nightingale hospitals. (90312)

Tabled on: 09 December 2021

This question was grouped with the following question(s) for answer:

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost was of setting up, running and closing the Nightingale hospitals. (90311)

Tabled on: 09 December 2021

Answer:

Edward Argar:

Total projected funding for the Nightingale hospital programme was ring-fenced at £466 million. National Health Service providers are currently auditing the accounts for 2020/21 and the final spending outturn will be published in due course.

NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that regions were responsible for co-

ordinating the redistribution of assets including beds and medical equipment from the Nightingale hospitals. Each host trust is responsible for managing a list of these assets. The remaining surplus stock has been collected and made available for national redistribution under the existing warehousing, asset tracking and logistics contracts.

The answer was submitted on 15 Dec 2021 at 14:57.

Improving the public sector

Today I have highlighted two disastrous management errors in public services which Parliament has criticised many times in the past. Yesterday Ministers presented their approach to both problems to try to put things right.

In both cases MPs asked about what would happen to the managers who made the mistakes, especially the top management of the Post Office who went on to spend large sums on lawyers to hound the people they had wrongly accused. One contributor has been muddling the state owned Postal Office up with the privatised mail services, which have nothing to do with this issue.

My prior concern over the years has been to speak with others for the postmasters who were so badly treated to get the accusations against them reversed and to give them compensation for their large financial losses forced upon them. I agree the government as owner of the business does need to tell us what will be done about those who pursued this policy at the Post Office. The bill for compensation will be substantial and falls to taxpayers as we own the Post Office.

The Defence Minister has accepted that the MOD needs to improve the way it handles contracts. He has also promised to seek to rescue this large contract by closer working with the defence supplier. He seemed confident that remedial costs fall to the supplier to pay.