

[Delay in Brexit](#)

Yesterday I and a few other MPs complained about the delay in Brexit and asked what it is for. Under the terms of the Statutory Instrument we now leave on 12 April unless the government has gained approval for the Withdrawal Agreement by Friday night. We are told the government may seek another debate and vote on it on Friday. I will post my speech in the debate later this morning.

[Contributions to this site](#)

There are too many long ones which I do not have time to check.

Given new laws pending from the EU over repeating other media items I will delete things that have long quotes or cross references to other sites as I have no wish to get entangled in any copyright issues.

[Parliament today is in danger of losing control](#)

The decision to have a series of indicative votes on certain backbench motions chosen by the Speaker may not produce the happy consensus its proponents wish. To many in the country it will look like a group of Remain voting MPs canvassing support for delay, dilution or cancellation of Brexit amongst themselves. MPs can vote for any number of the approved motions so the numbers will be quite difficult to interpret. Will any of the popular ones in Parliament be compatible with the Conservative or Labour Manifesto, with what the EU might accept and with the overriding promise to implement the results of the referendum? If the options are mainly variants of staying in much of the EU, allowing MPs to vote for several of these options at the same time will give the impression of even more Parliamentary support for failing to implement Brexit.

The public think Parliament is out to delay or stop Brexit

A recent Comres poll shows just 3% of the public think Parliament is doing a good job on Brexit, with 78% judging it to be doing a bad job.

The public wants to get on with Brexit, and dislike the way Parliament is trying to slow it down or stop it altogether. When asked about delay, 41% want to leave with no delay, and 33% want to leave with just a short delay. Staying in as a permanent option has only 35% support, showing a good number of Remain voters now want to get on with it and accept the result of the referendum.

The public are very critical of both Mrs May and Mr Corbyn, and think the negotiations have gone badly. They blame both the government for poor handling, and Parliament for helping undermine the UK bargaining position by seeking to rule out no deal and demanding the UK makes concessions. 6% think the Agreement is a good outcome for the UK with 40% thinking it is a good outcome for the EU.

Opinion is shifting amongst young voters, where more are coming round to the idea of leaving. Amongst 18-24 year olds 36% now wish to leave with 43% wanting to stay. The rest are don't know.

Yesterday the Telegraph published another new Comres poll. This showed 55% of the public thinking Parliament is trying to stop Brexit, and 54% think Remain MPs and the establishment have damaged the UK's negotiating position. Support for Leave amongst under 35 year olds is up by 7%, with bigger increases for older people.

MPs seeking to control the agenda in Parliament to hold a series of indicative votes should consider these findings carefully before voting. More than half the public think withdrawing our notification to leave would damage our democracy yet there are those in Parliament who favour this option.

The economic damage done by our membership of the EU

Too many in the media just accept the assumption that we have done well out of being in the EU and will lose when we leave. There is little evidence to support either of these contentions.

We joined in 1972. We were made to remove all tariffs on products the rest of

the EU was good at, whilst they maintained many barriers to service exports which we were good at. As a result there was a predictable deterioration in our goods trade balance with the EU, and closure or slimming of many of our factories. Our car industry suffered heavily from the tariff free competition of VW, BMW, Mercedes, Renault, Fiat and the others. BLMC in particular had to slim and close plants. Our Lancashire cotton industry and Yorkshire woollen industry was hit by Italian and German textiles. Our ceramic tile industry was damaged by Italian competition and later by Spanish. In the 1970s we lost a lot of manufacturing capacity. The nationalised steel industry had to start closing its five new large scale plants for lack of demand as steel using industries fell away in the EEC.

We also saw a further deterioration in our balance of payments as a result of high financial contributions we had to make to the EEC, as all those charges were negative flows across the exchanges. Soon after we joined there was a deep western slump which hit the UK particularly badly. Whilst this was not mainly the result of EEC membership, it exacerbated the bad trends EEC membership was causing.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s we saw another recession brought on by the UK's membership of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. These job losses and factory closures were entirely the result of EU membership, and very damaging.

More recently we have seen a lot of factories shift elsewhere in Europe thanks in part to EU grants tempting businesses away. When I was a business Minister one of the regular complaints from UK companies was unfair competition from the rest of the EU where companies in favoured locations got special EU grants and financial assistance on favourable terms or free.

The UK growth rate has been slower since 1972 than it was 1945 to 1972. Some try to say the war disrupts the picture, but it is difficult to see why. Whilst the war was a terrible thing, it gave us very full employment with the diversion of many people into the armed services. All their efforts did under standard accounting count as national output. There were also big increases in manufacturing output domestically as we had to produce most of our planes, vehicles and bombs nationally. There was also a surge in home food production. Of course there was also a fall in non military output as factories were diverted to war work. Imports from the continent obviously stopped as it was under German control, and imports from the rest of the world were restrained by German military action to prevent or destroy them.

An EU study has showed practically no gain from EU membership for the UK economy, but it is on optimistic assumptions. To me there has clearly been a modest net overall loss of output compared to what would have happened if we had stayed out, though of course output is up over our time in the EU as you would expect. The headwind of big financial contributions to the EU has been damaging. Margaret Thatcher's renegotiation helped a bit by cutting the burden.