

Brexit timeline: key dates in the saga of the UK's exit from the EU

Uncertainty continues to reign as the clock ticks down to 31 October deadline



Credit: Getty photos

It has been more than three years ¹; the UK voted to leave the EU, though to many it will feel like ₂.

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Following multiple extensions to the withdrawal date ³; political drama, Britain's default position now is to quit the bloc on 31 October with or without a deal.

But that could change if MPs succeed in pushing through ^{ins} designed to prevent no-deal Brexit and extend the deadline yet again, to 31 January 2020.

So how did the UK reach this impasse - and where are we now?

23 June 2016 - UK votes to Leave



5 : contradictory 6 results in the 7 to the EU referendum, most commentators expected Brits to opt to stay in the European Union. Even as the count was under way, Nigel Farage said it looked like 8 9 10 , the 11 won 12 51.9% to 48.1%, a gap of 1.3 million votes. David Cameron announced 13 as prime minister the following day.

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13 July 2016 - Theresa May becomes PM

Then home secretary Theresa May won the Conservative Party leadership contest by default, after all her challengers fell away.

16 15
"No new PM in the modern era will have entered with an y as full and
fateful as hers," said The Times. "She will have to reconcile her desire to 'make sure our
economy works for everyone', which depends on , with Brexit, which is likely to hurt
it."
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May's arrival at No. 10 brought a "culture change" at the top levels of government, "the
Cameron clique" of 18 and replacing them with "grammar-school
19", said Polly Toynbee in The Guardian.

17 January 2017 - Brexit means Brexit

In her first substantial speech on Brexit, May said that remaining in the single market would
mean being 20 by EU laws, which "to all intents and purposes, would mean not leaving
the EU at all". The speech revealed her desire for what has become known as a "21",
setting out the Government's 22 "Plan for Britain" and her negotiating . 23
out membership of the EU's customs union in the process.

29 March 2017 - trigger warning

24 May Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, formally 25 a two-year 26 to the UK exiting the bloc.

27 The Guardian's front page featured an image showing a 28 of the EU, with the UK pieces missing and replaced with the headline, "Today Britain steps into the unknown". Not to be outdone, The Sun physically projected the words "Dover and out" across the legendary White Cliffs of Dover.

8 June 2017 - snap general election

29 "It 30 weakened her, leaving May a 31", in the words of one of her senior colleagues."

8 December 2017 - birth of the backstop

After calling a snap election in a bid to increase her authority on Brexit in the Commons, May 30 and has to make a deal with the DUP to stay in power.

Following the general election, "May's reputation 31, arguably faster than any other in modern British political times", said the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg.

Following a series of late-night negotiations in Brussels, the UK and the EU agree a deal on the UK's so-called divorce bill, covering both EU and UK. 32 and the so-called Northern Irish 33

But the New Statesman's Stephen Bush predicted that there would be trouble ahead over the Ireland 34, writing: "Many of the stated objectives of 35 won't be fulfilled thanks to the obligations the United Kingdom has agreed to secure sufficient progress.

36 "Yes, the United Kingdom is out of the 37 and customs union in law - but agreeing to the necessary alignment in order to preserve the open border means that our laws will still be controlled de facto if not de jure in Brussels."

6 July 2018 - Chequers, mate

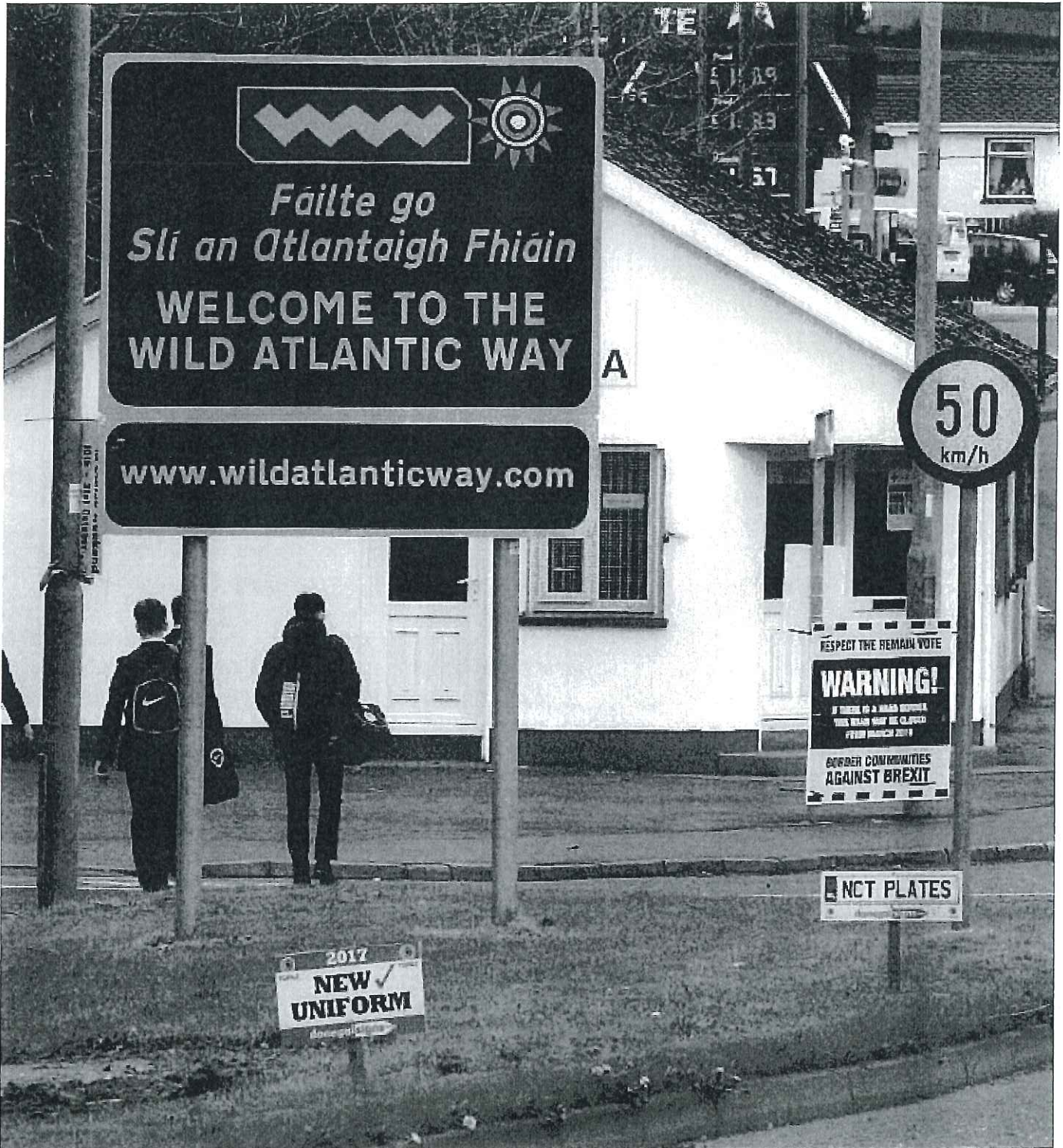
After the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill becomes law at the end of June, May takes her cabinet to 38 Chequers in order to sign off a collective position for the rest of the Brexit negotiations with the EU.

From 1999 to 2000
the first of the

28

But trouble was with Brexit Secretary David Davis resigning over May's new plan. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson followed Davis out the door, before describing the deal as a "suicide vest" for the British Constitution.

25 November 2018 - backstop's back



23

Following some enforced changes to May's Chequers Plan a page draft Withdrawal Agreement is published that contains a angers both the DUP and the Tory's Brexiteers.

of the EU, a 599- backstop which

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Under the deal agreed between May and Brussels, the backstop would keep the whole of the UK very closely aligned to EU customs rules, with some regulatory differences between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

15 January and 12 March 2019 - once more with meaning

Having pulled the vote before Christmas over fears that she would lose, May attempted to get her deal ratified by Parliament on 15 January. But with Brexiteers worried about the UK remaining in the UK through the backstop, and the DUP concerned about potential disparity between Northern Ireland and the UK, the PM suffered the heaviest defeat in modern parliamentary history, losing 432 votes to 202.

Further legal assurances from the EU about the temporary nature of the backstop were not enough to 42 Brexiteer rebellion, and May lost a second meaningful vote on her deal by 149 votes two months later.

12 April - the end of the beginning?

The UK's EU membership is now due to end on 31 October, with or without a deal. If a deal has not been agreed and ratified by then, the Government will face the choice of leaving without a deal, seeking more time, or even cancelling Brexit altogether.

But the belief that the EU would be willing to give the UK more time come October may be misguided. Germany's foreign minister Heiko Maas told the Financial Times: "They will have to decide what they want by October. You cannot drag out Brexit for a decade."

The continued impasse in Parliament led to a renewed belief that a general election would have to be called before October to break the deadlock.

Polling from Politico found that the Brexit culture war dividing the UK continues to polarise voters.

"Leave voters in the East Midlands and Northwest are moving toward the Tories and away from Labour, while Remain voters in the Southeast are shifting in the opposite direction," says the website.

"As things stand, it will be very difficult for either party to appeal to both Leave- and Remain-voting marginals at the same time, opening up the prospect of either a continuing stalemate or sweeping changes to the electoral map as voters base their allegiances less on traditional party loyalties," the website adds.

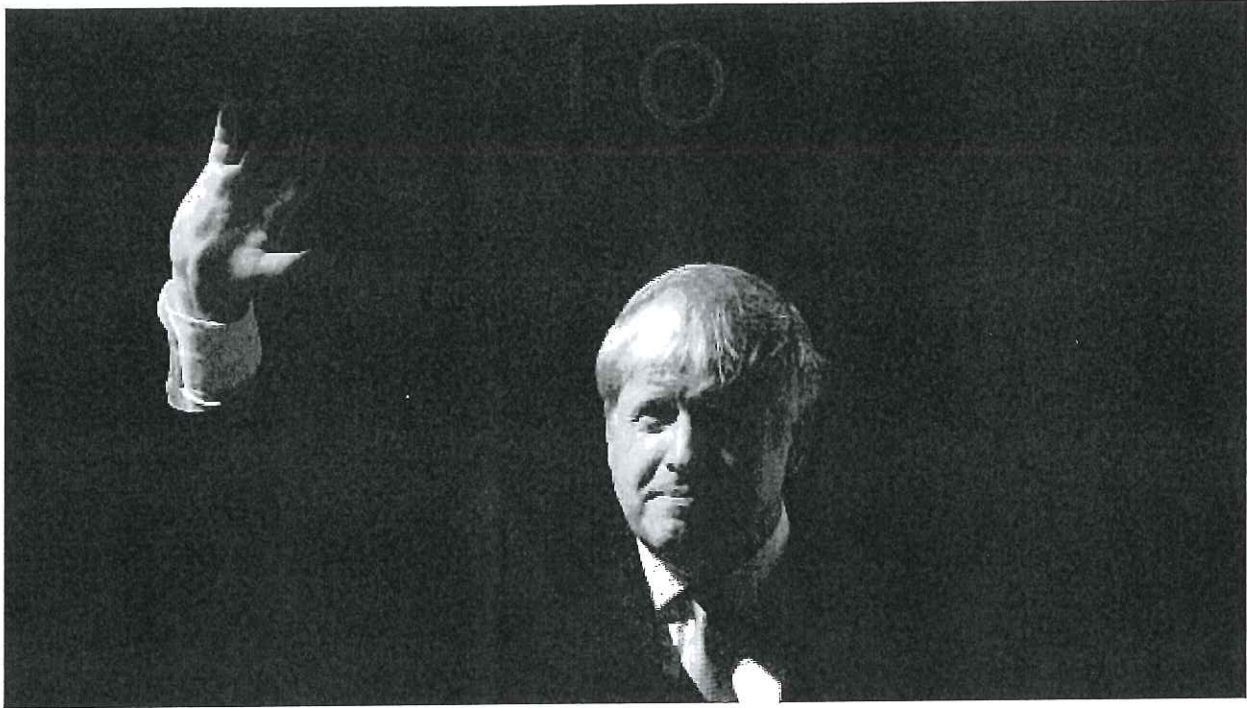
24 June - May bows out



After failing three times to get her withdrawal agreement through Parliament, Theresa May sets a resignation date of 7 June.

Speaking at a Downing Street podium, May said it had been “the honour of my life” to serve as PM. The visibly moved leader added she would leave “with no ill will, but with enormous and enduring gratitude to have had the opportunity to serve the country I love”.

24 July - the Johnson era begins



Boris Johnson enters Downing Street after winning the Conservative party leadership election with 66% of the vote, a comfortable victory over rival Jeremy Hunt.

In a remarkably ⁴³ acceptance speech, Johnson said that even some of his own supporters may “wonder quite what they have done”.

He repeated his campaign commitments to “deliver Brexit, unite the country and defeat Jeremy Corbyn”.

Johnson quickly selected a cabinet packed with loyal Brexiteers, and appointed Vote Leave director Dominic Cummings as his most senior adviser.

28 August - Parliament put on ice



The new PM asks the Queen ⁴⁴ for five weeks in the run-up to 31 October. ₄₅ ⁴⁶

Johnson claimed the ₄₅ was a routine move intended to ⁴⁶ a Queen's speech on 14 October setting out his government's legislative programme, the BBC reported.

But most commentators agree that the prorogation was scheduled to give MPs less time to try to block no-deal before the 31 October deadline.

Labour deputy leader Tom Watson described the move as an “⁴⁷ scandalous affront to our democracy”.

4 September 2019 - MPs take back control and BoJo demands general election



After voting to take control of Commons business for the day, MPs back a bill blocking a 31 October no-deal Brexit.

Opposition MPs and Tory rebels joined forces to ensure the legislation passed by 327 votes to 299, the London Evening Standard reported.

Their victory means that Johnson will have to ask for a Brexit extension beyond the 31 October Brexit deadline if he can't secure a deal with the EU.

The PM - who has called the 31 October deadline “do or die” - reacted by calling for a general election.

But opposition parties have collectively refused to back a general election vote until the legislation blocking a no-deal exit on Halloween 1⁴⁸ and the EU has agreed the extension, says The Guardian.