

# Brexit gets lost in turmoil of three PMs in seven weeks

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## Power-sharing deadline looms in Northern Ireland

Today's 2pm deadline has produced a result, with Rishi Sunak to be the UK's next Prime Minister. However there is a second deadline four days later at midnight on Friday which is rushing up and current indications are that it will be missed. This will then further delay a full Brexit for the entire United Kingdom... Again.

## What happens at midnight this coming Friday?

Power-sharing in Northern Ireland must resume by Friday, with a working Stormont administration, or the Government is obliged by law to dissolve the N.I. Assembly and call a new election in Northern Ireland. This will be its second in just seven months.

All of this arises out of the special arrangements in Northern Ireland for power-sharing, enshrined in UK law following the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

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# **The election and the summary of Brexit scenarios**

## **Scenario 1**

We now know that Rishi Sunak will soon be on his way to the Palace to see King Charles III.

He will then have just four days to resolve a crisis that has been going on for six years.

## **Scenario 2**

Chris Heaton Harris, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, quickly discusses a deal with new PM Rishi Sunak, Leader of the House Penny Mordaunt, the Leader of the Lords, the Chief Whip, and possibly the Chairman of the 1922 Committee.

This would involve rushing primary legislation through both Houses before the deadline at midnight on Friday, to extend the current arrangements so that no election in Northern Ireland has to be called.

## **Scenario 3**

Everyone simply ignores this and the UK Government is then obliged to call an election in N.I..

## **Scenario 4**

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) – fearing an even worse election result than they achieved earlier this year – buckles. At the last minute they agree to go back to the Assembly and resume power-sharing for the time being.

This would avoid the need for another election.

## **Background to the current dispute and its effects on a full Brexit**

The DUP walked out of the Assembly earlier this year, refusing to share power with Sinn Féin unless and until problems with the EU's N.I. Protocol have been fixed.

These mostly relate to the way trade has been diverted as a direct result of a border being placed down the middle of the Irish Sea. This had the effect of breaching the Act of Union and of breaching the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

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## ***OBSERVATIONS***

The EU first started weaponising Northern Ireland in late 2016, with the enthusiastic encouragement of the government of the Republic of Ireland.

Since then we have had to endure years of Westminster infighting, with large numbers of MPs refusing to respect the decision of the British people to leave the European Union.

In July 2021 when Liz Truss was Foreign Secretary in Boris Johnson's government she promised 'imminent' action on Northern Ireland.

**Yet here we are, more than six years after the EU Referendum, still waiting.**

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