

Brexit Reality is already exceeding expectations

*CIB committee member **John Scotting** assesses the first month of UK independence from the EU. Not only has Project Fear failed to materialise, Brexit reality is already exceeding even many Brexiteers' expectations.*

When we cast our votes in favour of an independent UK, most of us did so on the understanding that the first few months, if not years, would be economically challenging. Had our sole concern been short-term economic stability, we might have turned a blind eye to the loss of sovereignty and voted to remain in sclerotic decline on the autobahn to 'ever closer union'.

Remain-leaning media have tried to propagate the straw man that Brexit was supposed to have no downsides. But no matter how hard the most stubborn Euro-fanatics try, it is just not credible to claim that a couple of confiscated ham sandwiches proves that leaving the EU was a catastrophic clanger. Much to the collective chagrin of Euro flag-waving pseudo-nationalists, #BrexitReality is already proving to be much less damaging than they had hoped.

Within the first month we've seen our supposedly xenophobic 'Vote Leave government' offer to welcome disenfranchised residents of Hong Kong with open arms, and pro-Brexit commentators across the board lining up to do the same. We've seen our International Trade Minister announce the intention of Global Britain to add to the trade deals that have already been agreed with 87 countries by applying to join the Asian-Pacific bloc, CPTPP. Again, so-called 'Little Englanders' are celebrating this development rather than calling for the

drawbridge to be raised.

Fears of an exodus from the City have proven unfounded. UK-based manufacturers, like Nissan, now see a 'competitive advantage' in retaining their UK base, while EU-based operations, like that of Cadbury's, are moving into the UK. The mass unemployment that was supposed to follow our vote to leave, not only didn't come to pass then, but isn't even happening now, during a pandemic!

This, of course, brings us to the latest desperate argument from those who cannot stand to see Britain succeed: that Covid-19 is obfuscating the consequences of our departure.

It is certainly true that Covid renders any direct comparison of economic metrics impossible. As a result, perhaps neither side will ever be able to claim full victory.

But that is not the case on all matters. On one issue, in particular, it is emphatically clear which side has been vindicated by recent events.

A Brexit benefit to eclipse all others

After early investment in research, development, and production – which will ultimately benefit the whole world – Brexit Britain's indisputably world-leading vaccine roll-out programme has delivered a clear 'tangible benefit' to UK citizens.

While it may be difficult to place a value on the lives that early adoption will have saved, the economic impact in 2021 could be as much as £235 billion – now, where did we put that big red bus?!

Meanwhile, our European neighbours are not faring so well. Having insisted on taking control of the vaccine roll out, denying member states the opportunity to act independently,

Brussels proceeded to make a Horlicks of the job. With a degree of schadenfreude, we look on aghast at the diplomatic floundering, as the EU's attempts to mask its own failings grow increasingly desperate. First, lashing out at AstraZeneca and rubbishing their product in a comical 'we don't want it anyway' style tantrum. Then, allowing the green-eyed monster to get the better of them, they drew global criticism by threatening to block exports involving an entirely different company (Pfizer), endangering British lives in the process.

The whole debacle was finally compounded by the most embarrassing foul up of all: the EU Commission's decision to renege on the repeated promise to honour the Good Friday Agreement by triggering Article 16 of the Northern Irish Protocol. Their hollow threat was soon dropped, but the good people of Ireland are unlikely to be so quick to forget that the EU's sanctimonious mask slipped.

Democratic accountability as an end in itself

We Leave campaigners may have cause to gloat. But it is important that we don't stray into triumphalism. Not because, after repeated false accusations of racist gammonry, many of our opponents don't deserve it; but because focusing on such outcomes risks opening the door to a future Rejoin Campaign.

Yes, it is an earlier-than-expected demonstration that our newfound freedom to diverge from continental diktat can yield positive results. But before we crow too loudly, it might be wise to remember that UK governments are every bit as capable of embarrassing blunders. When the next inevitable gaffe takes place, we can expect to be gleefully 'reminded' that we voted for them to 'take back control'.

This, of course, is not actually true. We voted for 'the people' to take back control. We voted to reclaim the ability to hold our elected lawmakers to account. While Ursula von der

Leyen and her cronies are impervious to electoral consequence, our domestic politicians are not.

Admittedly, our electoral system is not perfect in that regard, and the post-devolution constitutional imbalances make matters significantly worse. But multiple wrongs don't make a right. Banishing the old European scapegoat from Westminster should enable us to focus on increasing the accountability of our own politicians, empowering voters in the process. If that involves constitutional reform, all the better.

Put simply, the UK citizenry is our demos. UK laws should be made by people who are exclusively accountable to UK citizens. So, we reject on principle membership of a vast federal technocracy, created for the purpose of 'pooling sovereignty' into the hands of Eurocrats and away from ordinary citizens. In that sense, and that alone, Brexiteers are (UK law) 'supremacists' and (civic) 'nationalists'.

Ultimately, no matter how awkward it may be for a generation of indoctrinated nouveau Europhiles to contest, repatriating sovereignty was always our principal aim. Not a means to an end; an end in itself. Making a success of it is a bonus.