

“Brexit has placed Irexit on the historical agenda,” Dublin’s ‘Irexiteers’ tell UK MPs

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“The blame for the Protocol problems rests primarily with Dublin – and the EU,” say Irish Irexiteers

We publish a letter sent from Dublin to British MPs

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In a letter sent to over 60 British MPs by the Republic of

Ireland's "National Platform EU Research and Information Centre", some important points are made in the run-up to the Conservative leadership election.

Yesterday their spokesman, Anthony Coughlan, who is Associate Professor Emeritus at Trinity College Dublin, gave an interview to CIBUK's Chairman. He also gave permission for the letter from the Republic's 'Irexiteers' to be made available to a wider audience.

Together with [Facts4EU.Org](https://facts4eu.org) – our affiliate – we are publishing below the letter they sent last week to UK MPs.

Extracts from a letter from Dublin to UK MPs

Dear [MP]

I am writing from Ireland to you and to some of your fellow Brexiteers in the European Research Group, the DUP and the wider House of Commons to express the hope that Mrs Liz Truss will succeed in her campaign to lead the Conservative Party and become UK Prime Minister.

My colleagues and I in the Republic of Ireland are, as you may know, **longstanding opponents of the EU on democratic and internationalist grounds**. We would like to make some points relating to Ireland that you may find helpful to Mrs Truss in her campaign.

1. The Northern Ireland Protocol

The Irish Government's claim that "any checks or controls anywhere on the island of Ireland would constitute a hard border" should be treated with the contempt that it deserves.

You possibly do not know that when Mr Leo Varadkar became Taoiseach here in 2017, he took steps to ensure that an unobtrusive digital border to monitor North-South trade in goods within Ireland could not be established, **by closing down fruitful discussions on this topic that were then taking place between the Irish and British Revenue authorities.**

These discussions had been initiated by his party predecessor as Taoiseach, Enda Kenny. Leo Varadkar called them off so as to facilitate the EU's desire to use the Irish border issue as an excuse to keep the whole of the UK in the EU single market and customs union. This was compounded by the willingness of Mrs Theresa May and her advisers to play along with that objective once she had lost her majority in the 2017 UK general election.

It is important that the incoming Prime Minister understands that the **North-South trading issues** in the context of the UK leaving the EU while the Republic of Ireland stays in it, **can be resolved relatively easily by the two Revenues** [HMRC and the Irish Revenue – Ed.] sitting down together and initiating trusted trader schemes and unobtrusive monitoring covering Irish North-South trade.

They need to know (and it is desirable that Irish public opinion should know) that **the blame for the Protocol problems rests primarily with Dublin – and the EU encouraged by Dublin – rather than with London.** Mr Varadkar is due to become Irish Taoiseach again next December under the rotating-Taoiseach arrangement that currently exists in the Republic.

2. Financing Social Care

British policy-makers may find it worthwhile examining how Ireland does this. Public financing of nursing home care for the elderly in the Republic has caused none of the controversy and problems here that it has done in Britain.

Known as the “Fair Deal” scheme, it covers full-time care in Old Peoples’ Homes, public and private. The cost is covered by the elderly person or couple paying up to 80% of their current income towards that, plus 7.5% of their assets, which is usually a house, for a maximum of three years. This means a cap of 22.5% of assets in toto, but this is only payable following their deaths when those assets are realized. The scheme does not require people in social care to sell their homes while they are living, and their heirs will still receive over three-quarters of their family assets.

This seems a much more sensible way of financing long-stay Nursing Home care for the elderly than raising National Insurance contributions for everyone. People who have assets as well as income use them to contribute to the cost of care, which seems intuitively fair to people, but only after their deaths and with a reasonable cap on the amount. There have never been significant objections to this scheme in Ireland.

It may well be worth considering for the UK. Indeed as a mode of financing it could usefully be extended to cover home-care packages for the elderly as well.

3. Ireland is now a net contributor to the EU

Public opinion in the Republic is likely to move in a more EU-critical direction over the next few years, especially if the Northern Ireland Protocol problem is dealt with sensibly, as it can be.

With the UK outside the EU, **the costs of EU membership for Ireland now significantly exceed the benefits**. Ireland now does more of its foreign trade with the UK and North America together than it does with the continental EU.

Since 2014 it has been a net contributor to the EU budget, having been a net recipient for most of the time since it

joined the EEC together with the UK in 1973. While the Republic's strongly Europhile political class has been hoping up to now that Brexit can be undone, especially by a future UK Labour Government, that hope is now fading. **People in the Republic will have to consider seriously in the time ahead whether it makes sense for Ireland to continue as an EU member.**

It can presumably never be in Britain's interest to have the whole of Ireland made part of a federalizing continental EU under German hegemony that now openly aspires to establishing its own army. Irish nationalists who aspire to a future united Ireland, however distant, are gradually having to face up to these facts.

Brexit has placed "Irexit" on the historical agenda. Irexit following Brexit can provide the basis for a future coming-together between Nationalists and Unionists in Ireland, while the support of the Bank of England, as well as of the ECB, will in time be needed to facilitate the early stage of the restoration of an independent Irish pound.

4. De-industrialising Britain

Britain has been de-industrialising since the 19th century days when it was the "workshop of the world", primarily due to its having been a major exporter of capital over that time and its maintenance of an over-strong sterling exchange rate to facilitate that.

Financial interests in the City want a strong pound, for that enables them obtain more foreign currency for sterling as they invest abroad. British industry on the other hand needs a weak pound so as to encourage manufactured exports, discourage competing imports and raise the profitability of domestic investment. There has therefore been a long-term conflict of

interest between UK Finance Capital and Manufacturing Capital, revolving round the currency exchange rate.

Raising labour productivity, which is the only stable basis of higher living standards for the British people, is much more easily achievable in manufacturing than in services. Investment in science, technology, manufacturing and power needs therefore to be prioritised over the foreign investment interests of the City of London if Britain is to reverse its relative economic decline and the British people are to achieve higher real living standards.

Going for a highly competitive exchange rate policy is therefore far more important than cutting taxes if there is to be an axe to the root of Britain's serious economic problems.

5. Ireland and the euro

The Republic of Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" economic growth rates of 8% a year in the 1994-2000 period were based on a highly competitive exchange rate, not on taxation policy, contrary to what Mr Jeremy Hunt mistakenly contended in his recent tilt at the Conservative Party leadership.

Ireland's Europhiles threw away the advantage of having an independent currency and exchange rate when they joined the Eurozone. They did this on the naïve assumption that the UK would soon be following them. But that is another story. However, the euro currency now afflicts Ireland with an unsuitable exchange rate.

My colleagues and I hope that these points on Ireland, or some of them, may be of use to you and your colleagues in supporting Mrs Truss in the Conservative Party leadership contest over the coming weeks.

With good wishes,
Yours sincerely

Anthony Coughlan

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