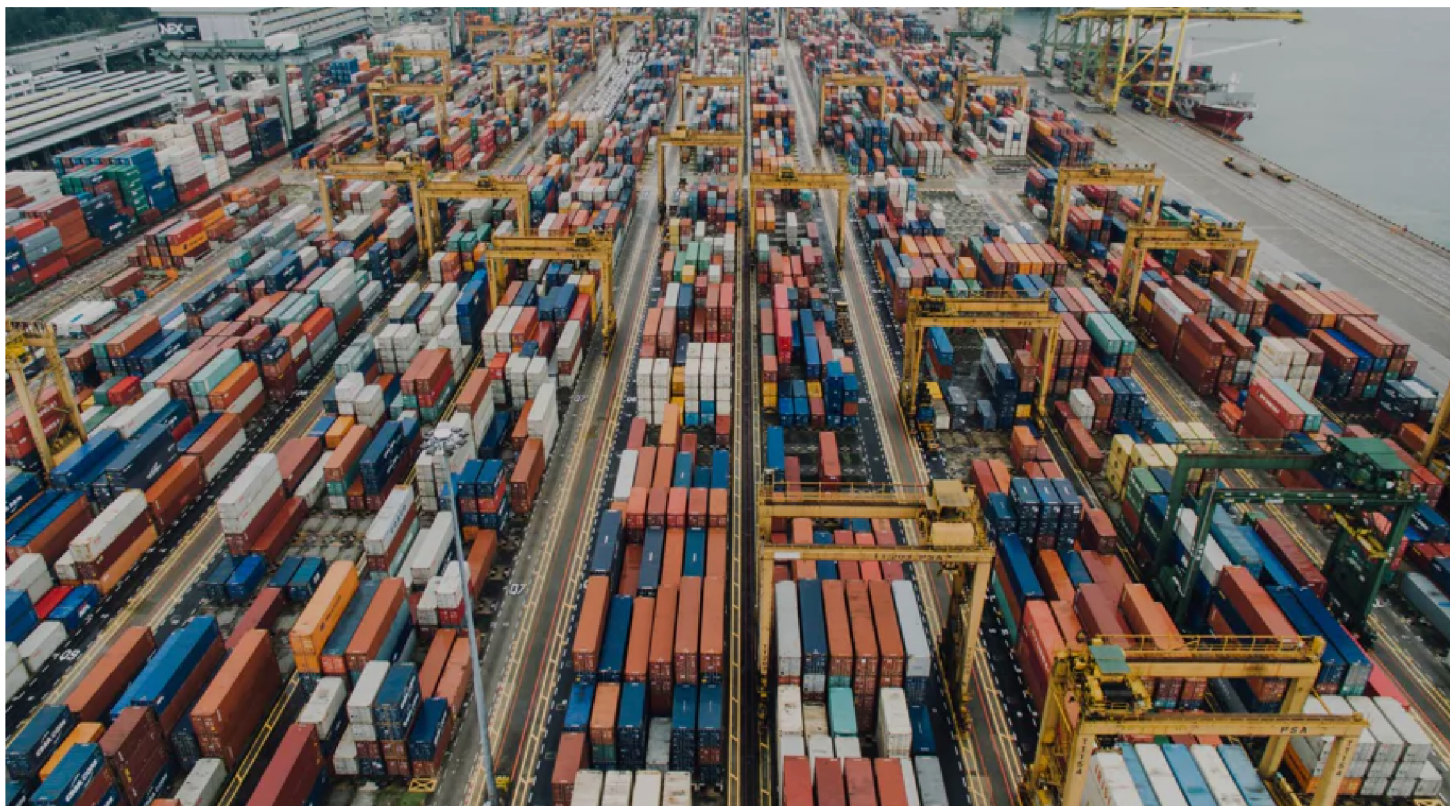


# Public deserve final say on Brexit



## Public must be given choice on whether Theresa May's version of Brexit beats the deal we already have with Europe

In many ways I'm with the vast swathes of people who wish we could stop talking about Brexit, not least because it means the so many other issues plaguing our country are being left to fester untreated.

But with little more than 800 hours until the UK is due to leave the European Union there is still no deal in prospect.

The stakes couldn't be higher – for jobs, industries, rights and even for the United Kingdom as we know it.

Back in 2016 GMB campaigned for a 'reform and remain' position– not happy with the status quo but on balance better off in – one we termed an 'angry remain'.



But we accepted the outcome of the referendum and our view was to make the best of it - to grasp any opportunities it brought with both hands and minimise the negatives.

GMB never agreed with those who demanded an instant replay of the referendum hoping of simply overturning the result – because, however we had voted, we wanted to make it work.

But two and a half years later, what is unfolding is an epic shambles that could very soon spell disaster for our nation.

“ There are no unicorns – or pots of gold at the end of the rainbow – just real choices with real-life consequences that each of us ultimately will have to live by.

**Tim Roache, General Secretary**

Every day that goes by businesses and public services are spending a fortune trying to prepare for a no deal scenario which would be an unprecedented self-inflicted disaster for our country.

Whenever I speak with members the word that keeps cropping up is ‘uncertainty’.

Businesses are hurting – delaying investment, paying sky-high prices for stockpiling and not committing to providing the decent, permanent jobs we need for the future.

Whether in manufacturing chemicals or ceramics – or in retail, ports, and logistics – Brexit chaos is making things worse, not better.

The truth is the promises that were made during the 2016 referendum are a million miles from the reality we are now facing.

My fear is that the weakness of our economy and mounting uncertainty will make it harder for people to get by and lead to further insecurity.

We are rapidly running out of options. The clock is ticking and something needs to break the logjam in Westminster.

The Prime Minister refuses to budge, there’s no genuine attempt to get consensus and no deal would be an absolute economic disaster.



With no substantive changes to the direction of the Prime Minister's deal and the iceberg of no deal getting nearer, the public must take over the controls.

David Cameron started this mess with a referendum when he was Prime Minister, pandering to his party's fears of UKIP.

We cannot allow another Conservative Prime Minister to deliver a grubby political stitch up to meet the needs of internal Tory party politics rather than the best interests of our country.

That will not put this question to bed for a minute, let alone a generation.



I believed then, as I do now, that our destiny should be put in the hands of the people.

There will be those who say 'we voted once, get on with it'. I understand their frustration, I really do.

We were told this would be so easy – and yet the very same people who told us that have since moved their wealth offshore or vacated the scene, pulling up the drawbridge because they know it is anything but straight forward.

The referendum vote was about whole communities cut off and left behind, trapped in insecure work amidst the rubble of crushed industries, often unable to pay their bills or keep a roof over their heads.

And there must be a radical agenda to address those deep wounds.

**“** If the Prime Minister's deal is the will of the people, then no-one will doubt it and the country can then move on. But equally people might look at the practicalities and say



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Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, a landmark achievement that had once been thought impossible, but which brought lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

That negotiated settlement was agreed by a public vote so that people both sides of the border could see the actual deal that had been negotiated by the politicians, with all its trade-offs, and have the final say.

Solving a national problem requires popular consent and the only way to start to heal the deep wounds that have divided our country is to lay the reality of the final options out and let the public choose.

Putting the Government's deal to the people doesn't mean Brexit can't happen.

If the Prime Minister's deal is the will of the people, then no-one will doubt it and the country can then move on.

But equally, given the promises made and how we arrived here, people might look at the practicalities and say maybe we need to think again.

And so it is the people who must be the ones to decide whether Theresa May's version of Brexit beats the deal we already have with Europe.

There are no unicorns - or pots of gold at the end of the rainbow - just real choices with real-life consequences that each of us ultimately will have to live by.

This is a crossroads - a historic decision awaits that will define our country and our politics for generations.

The people must have the final say if we are to settle the issue of Brexit once and for all.

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## Press office

079859 1525698

[press.office@gmb.org.uk](mailto:press.office@gmb.org.uk)

## Member requiring help?

Click to contact your local GMB Region

[info@gmb.org.uk](mailto:info@gmb.org.uk)



