



THE BBC AND BREXIT

SURVEY OF SERIES 3 OF BBC RADIO 4'S
'BREXIT: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED'
19 – 23 FEBRUARY 2018

“18 of the 24 main interviewees were against Brexit, with 76% of the words spoken, against only 3 who were in favour, with 7% of the words spoken”

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SUMMARY:

The third series of the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed' was broadcast on five consecutive days between 19 February and 23 February, 2018. Each programme was 12 minutes long and was presented by the BBC's EU 'Reality Check' reporter, Chris Morris.

Each edition dealt with the projected impact of Brexit and there were five separate themes: the UK pharmaceuticals sector, food and agriculture, the future of British Overseas Territories (the featured ones were Gibraltar and Anguilla), the regions of the UK outside London, and the so-called 'transitional phase' after March 2019.

It was projected as an objective examination of the issues of Brexit, but it was not. Instead, Chris Morris and the programme team assembled and edited a range of contributions which were overwhelmingly biased against Brexit and pro-EU in their outlook.

There were 46 speakers in total but 22 made very short contributions, often as part of montage sequences, amounting to 285 words in total, and equating to just 3 per cent of the overall programme airtime.

The 'meat' of the programme was delivered by the 24 main interviewees who provided longer contributions. This group accounted for 48 per cent of the total airtime. 18 of the 24 were pro-EU/anti-Brexit; only three were anti-EU/pro-Brexit; two contributors made points both for and against; and one was neutral. The imbalance was startling. The 18 who made negative points on Brexit delivered 3,824 words (76 per cent of words spoken by guests in this category), those speaking positively 352 words (seven per cent), and mixed/neutral speakers 838 words (17 per cent). The anti-Brexit to pro-Brexit word count ratio was thus almost **11 to one**. The ratio of pro-EU to anti-EU speakers in this category was 6:1.

Bias in broadcasting, of course, is not measured by metrics alone, but such calculations are held in academic methodology to be a reliable pointer to its existence. Transcript analysis confirms that the negativity from these contributors against Brexit was very strong. At a headline level, it included predictions of serious problems in the regulatory regime governing the pharmaceuticals sector and huge delays in Britain being able to use pioneering medical drugs; the danger of food price rises of up to 46 per cent; the sovereignty of Gibraltar and the economic well-being of both Gibraltar and Anguilla coming under unprecedented attack; the West Midlands, as the chosen main example of a region of the UK, facing serious threats to its

prosperity; and a transition period likened to walking the plank, with the likelihood of a UK ruled by the EU without any say.

The pessimism was heavily compounded by the comments and opinions of Chris Morris, who spoke 49 per cent of the words across the five programmes. His positive points are detailed in Part Two and were a very minor part of the programmes. Mostly, Mr Morris amplified the negativity of those gloomy about the impact of Brexit, and he strongly challenged or cut short those who made positive points. His primary intent seemed to echo the 'walking the plank' metaphor introduced in the final programme.

Mr Morris did not tell listeners in his introductions and commentary that some of the key contributors who were negative about Brexit had clear pro-EU views and had been campaigners for Remain since before the EU Referendum. One, Professor of Law Catherine Barnard, held the Jean Monnet chair at Cambridge, and was thus at least partly paid for by the EU.

This boils down to that BBC 'Reality Checking' is a complete misnomer. In this series, the BBC seemed intent to cram into 60 minutes as many potential problems about Brexit as it could, with only a fig-leaf acknowledgement of the belief that it presents the UK with vibrant new opportunities.

PART ONE: STATISTICAL FINDINGS

1.1 OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

News-watch monitored the five editions in Series 3 of BBC Radio 4's 'Brexit: A Guide for The Perplexed', broadcast each lunchtime between Monday 19 and Friday 23 February, 2018.

Each programme was a 12-minute pre-recorded package, presented by the BBC's Europe Correspondent, Chris Morris. The titles were: 'Medicines'; 'Food'; 'Gibraltar', 'Brexit's most Vulnerable' (principally about post-Brexit prospects in the West Midlands), and 'Status Quo' (about the transition period).

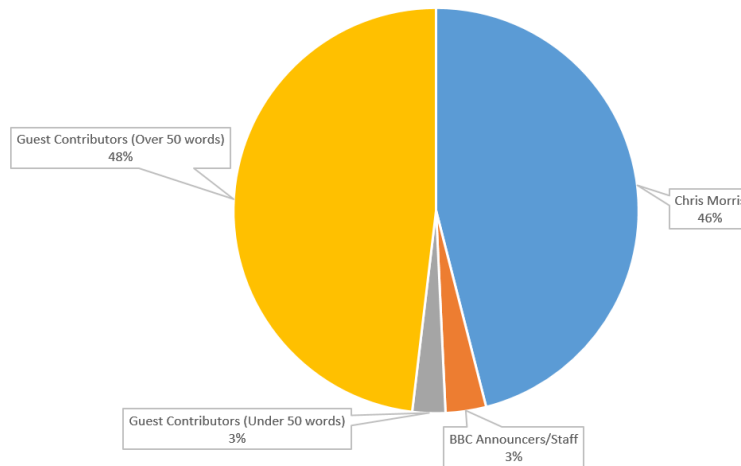
Presentation was light-hearted: a jukebox with music selected for its relevance to each of the five topics, interjections, buzzers, gongs and montage sequence, presumably with the purpose of maintaining listener attention. Chris Morris was explicit in that the series wanted to 'avoid talking too much about politics in this series and focus on the practicalities', and although a significant number of politicians were included, their input was brief.

All editions of Series 3 were fully transcribed and a line-by-line textual analysis was undertaken to assess the contents of each programme. Guest speakers were coded according to their viewpoints, and, where possible, whether their contributions offered a positive or negative outlook on Brexit.

1.2 DIVISION OF AIRTIME AND SPEAKERS

In total, 46 external speakers contributed to the five editions. For the purposes of this analysis, they have been divided into two categories: the 22 speakers who provided brief contributions of under fifty words in length, often as part of quick-fire 'montage' sequences; and the 24 speakers who provided lengthier contributions, predominantly in the form of pre-recorded interviews.

The chart shows how the five programmes were divided in terms of space, calculated using total words spoken by each contributor:



Category	Words	Proportion
Chris Morris, Presenter	4,796	46%
BBC Announcers/Staff	337	3%
Guest Contributors (Under 50 words)	285	3%
Guest Contributors (Over 50 words)	5,014	48%
Total	10, 432	100%

As the chart illustrates, there was an almost even split between guest contributions (51% of the total words spoken) and commentary from Chris Morris and other BBC staff (49% of the words spoken).

1.3 MONTAGE SEQUENCES AND SHORT CONTRIBUTIONS

Of the 46 guest speakers who appeared in the series, 22 provided contributions of less than fifty words. In total, these 22 shorter contributions amounted to just 285 words. Despite representing almost half the number of external speakers, their contribution represented only 3% of the airtime apportioned to invited guests.

20 of the 22 guests in the category were politicians. Often they appeared in 'montage' sequences, and identification was reliant on audience familiarity with particular voices, as they were unnamed in the commentary. The soundbites were often extracts from existing recordings – press conferences, statements to Parliament and speeches – as opposed to primary source material gathered specifically for the programme.

The shortest contribution was a single word from the Prime Minister, Theresa May, who said simply 'implementation' – in a montage designed to suggest a disagreement between the EU and UK on language (the EU speakers both preferring to talk about a post-Brexit 'transition').

The longest contribution was a 49-word soundbite from Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Jeremy Hunt, a leading light of the Remain campaign in the 2016 referendum, who has since stated he has changed his position.¹ He stated that patients 'benefit from the highest possible levels of integration between the UK and European pharmaceutical industry', and that this would be the case the UK would be making in the Brexit negotiations.²

Two thirds of the contributions were ten words or less, and with an average length of just 13 words, they were mostly too brief for speakers to make a coherent argument for or against Brexit.

Only two in this category were non-politicians. The first was a journalist, asking a question of Boris Johnson, in Episode 2, 'Food' on 20 February. After additional research, it was unclear whether or not this was a BBC journalist, and therefore the speaker was included in the totals as an external contributor. The second non-politician was apparently a 'taxi driver' who appeared in Episode 4, 'Brexit's Most Vulnerable' on 22 February, in the following sequence:

CHRIS MORRIS: Taxi?!

TAXI DRIVER: Alright mate.

CHRIS MORRIS: Can we go to Brexit please?

TAXI DRIVER: That's gonna cost you.

It was impossible to discern whether the exchange was a real clip or staged. There are three possibilities: first, that this was a real taxi driver, making a specific point on Brexit; second that this was a real taxi driver's voice, edited to suggest an opinion on Brexit; or third, that this was a member of the production team participating in a pre-scripted skit. For the purposes of classification, it has been deemed that this was a genuine taxi driver, rather than a staged effort intended to make a partisan point.

The decisions to include the journalist and taxi driver as 'external' contributors affect both the guest totals and the word count figures presented in this survey, although the impact is marginal.

The number of shorter contributions made applying the normal News-watch categorisation processes more difficult. Historically, coding has always been based upon the content of the words spoken rather than on the political standpoint of the speaker. But here, the brevity of the contributions made this problematic.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/11/how-remain-voting-tories-responded-to-new-referendum-question>

² BBC Radio 4, Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed, Monday 19 February 2018

Michel Barnier, for example, said simply: 'Just the clock ticking'. This was taken from an undoubtedly pro-EU statement by him, part of a riposte to Boris Johnson, who had told the EU (and Mr Barnier) to 'go whistle'. But would listeners, a) have recognised his voice (the extract was unattributed), or b) realised the pro-EU intent of his words? Similarly, one of Boris Johnson's two appearances focused solely on him apparently mishearing the word 'clarity' as 'carrot' during a press conference. Its inclusion seemed to be designed to paint him as foolish and the Foreign Secretary made no direct political argument – but given his profile as one of the key figures in the Leave campaign, would it be fair for him to count him as a pro-Brexit voice, no matter the content of his contribution?

There were also occasions when political content was immediately undermined by the commentary. For example, was an extract from a pro-Brexit speech by Jacob Rees-Mogg (as with Michel Barnier, unattributed) in which he claimed the UK would be in danger of becoming an EU vassal state during the transitional period. As it was faded out, Chris Morris said, 'It is kind of awkward when one of your big slogans is 'Take Back Control' to find that you've actually, for a short while, lost even more control.' Even if listeners had grasped this was a pro-Brexit point by a Leave supporter, it was immediately countermanded by the presenter.

With these provisos, the 22 speakers in the 'Short Contributions' category were coded, based where possible on the content of their contributions, but also taking into account their known political positions on Brexit.

Programme	Name	Party or Role	Position	Words
Medicines	Theresa May	Conservative Party	Positive	3
Medicines	Michel Barnier	European Commission	Negative	4
Medicines	David Davis	Conservative Party	Positive	6
Medicines	Keir Starmer	Labour Party	Negative	6
Medicines	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Positive	3
Medicines	Jeremy Hunt	Conservative Party	Positive	49
Food	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Positive	32
Food	Neil Parish	Conservative Party	Positive	7
Food	Journalist	Unknown	Neutral	11
Food	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Positive	10
Food	Donald Tusk	European Commission	Negative	17
Gibraltar	Fabian Picardo	Gibraltar Chief Minister	Neutral	41
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Taxi Driver	Taxi Driver	Negative	6
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Michel Barnier	European Commission	Negative	26
Status Quo	Guy Verhofstadt	European Commission	Negative	16
Status Quo	Philip Hammond	Conservative Party	Positive	13
Status Quo	Angela Merkel	German Chancellor	Negative	2
Status Quo	Jacob Rees-Mogg	Conservative Party	Positive	23
Status Quo	Michel Barnier	European Commission	Neutral	2
Status Quo	Theresa May	Conservative Party	Positive	1
Status Quo	Unnamed Speaker	European Commission	Neutral	3
Status Quo	David Davis	Conservative Party	Positive	4

11 speakers, all from the Conservative Party, were coded as pro-Brexit, nine speakers were coded as anti-Brexit (mainly from the European Commission or member states), and four were coded as neutral.

However, of the 11 Conservative appearances, only six came from guests who were 'firm' supporters of Brexit who had campaigned for Leave during the referendum (David Davis and Boris Johnson appeared twice each, along with single contributions from Michael Gove and Jacob Rees-Mogg). As previously mentioned, the Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has since the EU Referendum publically changed his position on Brexit³, although in his contribution he called for continued close cooperation with the EU on medicines, which listeners may have taken as a pro-EU perspective. Theresa May, though clearly pursuing Brexit, has repeatedly declined to say whether she would change her vote to Leave in the event of a second referendum.⁴

Conversely, the majority of anti-Brexit/Pro-EU opinion came from the European Commission. There was, additionally, one brief soundbite from Labour's Keir Starmer, not making a clear pro-EU comment, but juxtaposed in a montage sequence to sound as though he was contesting a point made by David Davis.

Of the 285 words spoken in this category, 82 words (28%) came from speakers who identifiably pro-EU or anti-Brexit; 151 words (53%) came from speakers who were anti-EU or pro-Brexit , and 52 words (18%) were from speakers coded as neutral.

Overall, the breadth of opinion offered by this group of speakers was narrow, and for the most part the selection of material simply communicated to the audience that the UK government is in negotiation with the EU. There was little space for substantive argument. Although, the standard News-watch coding process was applied for the purpose of thoroughness, many of these speakers could just as equally have been categorised as 'neutral', given they often made no overt political point. As such, it has been deemed that they made no substantive impact on the overall balance of the programme.

³ <http://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/iaian-dale/jeremy-hunt-hammers-arrogant-eu-commission/>

⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-second-referendum-vote-brexit-refuses-to-answer-question-lbc-radio-a8169056.html>

1.4 MAIN SPEAKERS

24 guests provided contributions longer than fifty words. Most were primary source interviews, with guests interviewed specifically for the programme on the basis of their position or area of expertise.

Guests in this category were given the space to outline their opinions at some length, with an average of 209 words per speaker, and all were introduced by name, either by themselves or in the presenter's commentary. Their contributions accounted for 48% of the total words spoken across the five editions, approximately 29 minutes from the hour of material in five programmes, and 16 times more space than the 22 speakers in the 'shorter contributions' category.

This cohort was coded using News-watch's established methodology, with categorisations based on the contents of each contribution, rather than any presupposition of a guest's viewpoint.

18 of the 24 guests (75%) offered a negative perspective on Brexit; three (12.5%) offered a positive opinion on Brexit, and three (12.5%) gave a neutral or a mixed view, in which they raised both positive and negative points.

A detailed assessment of the main guest contributions is presented in Part Two of this paper, in a line-by-line analysis of the programme transcripts, together with a critique of Chris Morris's commentary. In the following section, only those contributions which require further explanation in terms of coding decisions are discussed in detail.

The guests who spoke negatively about Brexit or positively about the EU were as follows:

Programme	Contributor Name	Party or Role	Words
Medicines	Holly Jarman	Study Author	243
Medicines	Leslie Galloway	Ethical Medicines Industry Group	183
Medicines	Alasdair Breckenridge	MHRA	226
Food	Cedric Porter	World Potato Markets	399
Food	Viviane Gravey	Queens University in Belfast	346
Food	Aoife Cox	The Daily Spud Website	114
Gibraltar	Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrió	Historian of Modern Spain	143
Gibraltar	Marlene Hassan Nahon	Daughter of former Gibraltar Chief Minister	110
Gibraltar	John Isola	Gibraltar Chamber of Commerce	140
Gibraltar	Blondel Cluff	Anguilla's representative in London	154
Gibraltar	Susie Alegre	Lawyer	143
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Steve Brittan	BSA Tools, Birmingham	281
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Philip McCann	University of Birmingham	382
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Rebecca Jones	Midlands Economic Forum	90
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Kate Bell	TUC	124
Status Quo	Catherine Barnard	University of Cambridge	266
Status Quo	Mujtaba Rahman	Eurasia Group Consultancy	327
Status Quo	Diana Zimmermann	ZDF Television	153

In total, the 18 guests speaking negatively about Brexit delivered 3,824 words across the five editions, an average of 212 words per speaker.

Only two speakers in this category presented any coding difficulty. In Episode 2, 'Food', Cedric Porter of World Potato Markets made a point that UK farmers might potentially increase production of potatoes to meet demand, rather than relying on EU imports 'if the price was right', but the bulk of his contribution focused on the possibility of price rises for consumers and problems in securing EU labour post-Brexit. The programme augmented his comments with an alarm sound and a voice saying 'Price Rise Alert' – indicating to listeners that this aspect was of more concern than any potential opportunities.

Second, Steve Brittan, from BSA Tools in Birmingham, spent some of his contribution providing a factual history of his company. It was only later that he raised negative points concerning Brexit, including manufacturing being 'stung', increased levels of uncertainty, and concerns about the length of time it would take to build new relationships outside of the EU. It was decided to place him into the 'Negative' category, rather than attempt to subdivide his contribution into 'Neutral' and 'Negative', given that those sections which were not overtly concerned with Brexit served to provide listeners with detail on his personal expertise and potential authority on the matter.

The guests who spoke positively about Brexit or against the EU were as follows:

Programme	Name	Party or Role	Words
Medicines	Ajan Reginald	Celixir	205
Food	Ksenia Karpenko	Potato Café Owner	72
Gibraltar	Joe Garcia	Journalist	75

In total, the three guests speaking positively on Brexit delivered 352 words over the five editions, an average of 117 words per speaker.

Ksenia Karpenko, co-founder of The Potato Project café in Soho offered the shortest contribution of all the Main Speakers, and the majority of the space was taken with Ms Karpenko explaining her reasons for opening the café, and listing items on the menu. Chris Morris noted that she was 'concerned about Brexit and the potential effect on prices, but [is] not put off by it.' Ms Karpenko said, 'Definitely the menu will be changing, that's the best thing about the creativity. Since my background is Russian, I'm not afraid of changes.'

In effect, her response was not actively welcoming Brexit, but simply stating she was unafraid of change (and Chris Morris had also mentioned her stated specific negatives – namely concerns about price increases in his commentary). However, given the wealth of pessimistic opinion across the five editions, it was decided to include Ms Karpenko in the Positive category, simply because her contribution was loosely upbeat.

As with the appearance by Steve Brittan, Ms Karpenko's full contribution was included for the purpose of the statistics, despite only 23 of her 72 words being directly on the matter of Brexit.

The speakers who offered Neutral or Mixed views on Brexit or the EU were as follows:

Programme	Name	Party or Role	Words
Food	Patrick McGuigan	Freelance Food Journalist	283
Brexit's Most Vulnerable	Paul Forrest	Midlands Economic Forum	272
Status Quo	Aarti Shankar	Open Europe	283

In total, the three guests delivered 838 words, an average of 280 words per speaker. The first two appearances included a mixture of both positive and negative points; the third speaker provided a more neutral overview of the current Brexit negotiations:

In Episode 2, 'Food', freelance journalist and organiser of a London cheese festival, Patrick McGuigan, began with a positive opinion on Brexit, noting that he had spoken to a cheesemaker whose products had become more competitive 'almost overnight' following the referendum. But he tempered this by saying that a lot of ancillary products required for the cheesemaking process are sourced from Europe. Chris Morris raised the spectre of tariffs of over 40% on Italian and Irish cheese, in the wake of a 'no deal' Brexit. Mr McGuigan responded briefly with a positive point, that there are 'some brilliant British cheeses out there', but added that there were also some amazing French and Spanish cheeses, and he wouldn't want to give up eating Comté or Gorgonzola or Manchego because they became too expensive to buy. In an additional soundbite, used later in the package, Mr McGuigan said that it wasn't 'as simple' as people buying British, 'it's far more complicated than that.' He said planning for the industry was difficult, with the uncertainty over tariffs.

In total, Mr McGuigan's 283-word contribution comprised: a neutral 29-word introduction in which he gave his name and explained his occupation; 87 words making positive points about Brexit and 167 words making negative points. (This was bolstered by 54 words from Chris Morris, making a negative point about the threat of tariffs). Although coded as 'mixed', Mr McGuigan spoke almost twice as many words negatively about Brexit than he did for it.

In the fourth edition of the series, 'Brexit's Most Vulnerable', Paul Forrest of the Midlands Economic Forum outlined a number of positives relating to Brexit. He explained how his organisation had started to speak to German regional states about improving trade and economic ties, and how 'even though you leave the European Union, the very fact that you're changing your trading relationship with them does throw up new opportunities.' He added, however, a negative point: that this would depend on negotiating skills, and currently there are 'more gold medal-winning Olympic cyclists than people trained in trade negotiations.' Chris

Morris interjected to suggest, 'Maybe we should get the cycling team to do the negotiations, it might be more successful', and Mr Forrest responded to this with another positive, suggesting that the cycling team are a good example of looking across an economy to shave seconds of their race times, and if this strategy was applied to the rest of British manufacturing, 'I think innovation would really take off.' A final point, later in the programme was more downbeat, with Mr Forrest expressing concern that business in the Midlands would be ignored, given that other sectors are able to lobby the government more effectively. He said that national government had looked at Brexit impacts with Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the City of London, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, but that there was no formal mechanism for the West Midlands to articulate its view.

In total, Mr Forrest offered 166 words that were positive on Brexit, and 106 words that were negative, an approximate 3:2 ratio in favour of positive points.

The final speaker coded as 'Neutral', Aarti Shankar from the think tank Open Europe, appeared in the last episode of the series, 'Status Quo.' Open Europe had previously warned that Brexit would pose 'unpredictable political and economic risks'⁵, had opposed the referendum on Britain's EU membership and supported David Cameron's 'reform agenda', but it adopted a neutral stance during the campaign itself, and, in the period since the Leave vote has dedicated itself to 'the promotion of democratically grounded economic, trade and investment policies which foster growth, employment and freedom under the rule of law.'

In the first part of her contribution, Ms Shankar delivered an objective assessment of the current debate on the movement of citizens, and outlined the UK and EU positions, without making any overt political point. Chris Morris interrupted with a negative, saying that there was a 'difficulty' within the transition period, in that laws could emerge from the EU, over which the UK would have no vote, but Ms Shankar said that the UK government had pushed back against this EU idea, and said she would imagine that the UK would argue for a Norway-style 'right to reservation' on any new proposals.

In summation, the contributors coded as 'Mixed' delivered slightly more negative words on Brexit, (273) than positive (253) and so although their inclusion in a separate category impacts slightly on the overall word count proportions, categorising them in this way has little material effect on the overall balance.

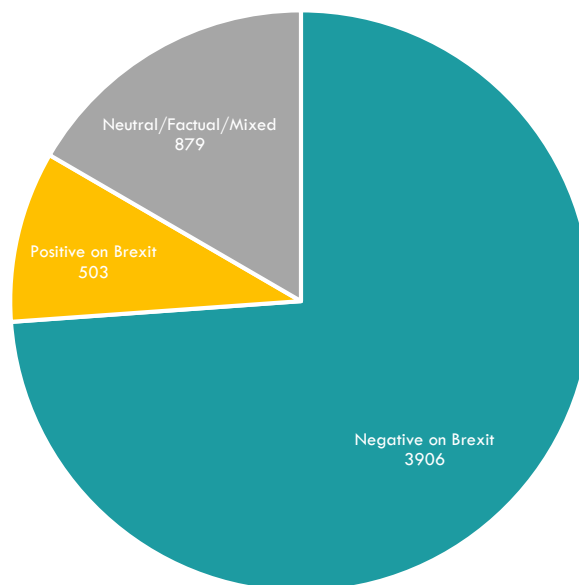
⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/10/britain-stay-europe-euroscptic-thinktank-report>

1.5 WORD COUNT ANALYSIS

The guests selected by Chris Morris for inclusion in the series created a significant imbalance which strongly favoured those speaking negatively on Brexit.

In the interests of transparency, two sets of word count figures have been compiled, first for all 46 contributors across the five editions (including the 22 shorter contributions, under fifty words in length, detailed in Section 1.3) and second, a calculation which isolate only the more substantive contributions (as outlined in Section 1.4).

Graph 1: Word Counts – All 46 Contributors



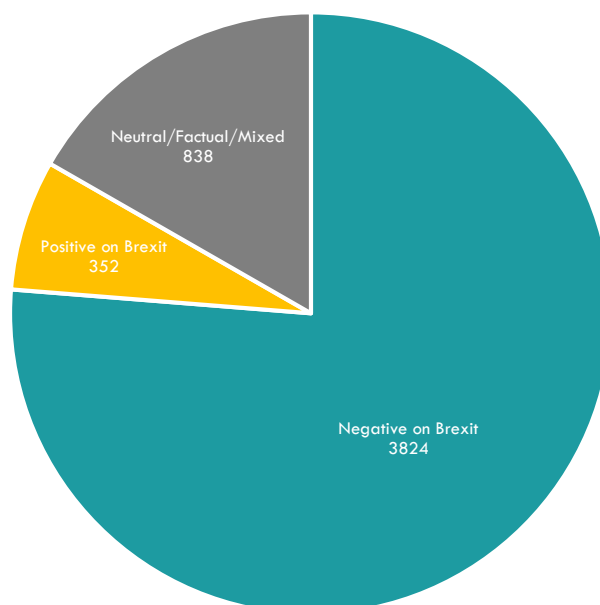
The 46 guests delivered 5,288 words. The space given to the three categories was as follows:

Negative on Brexit, or Pro EU: 3906 words - 74%;

Positive on Brexit or Anti-EU: 503 words - 9%;

Neutral, Factual or Mixed: 879 words - 17%

Graph 2: Word Counts – 24 ‘Main Speakers’:



The ‘Main Speakers’ delivered 5,014 words in total. The space given to the three categories was as follows:

Negative on Brexit, or Pro EU: 3824 words - 76%;

Positive on Brexit or Anti-EU: 352 words - 7%;

Neutral, Factual or Mixed: 838 words - 17%.

1.6 CONCLUSION

“I was able to use bias in my reports by giving less time to one than the other. I reported on both, but the angle and words and the language I used . . . I was able to project my own particular political positions on things in a very subtle way.”

In January 2018, it emerged that the Shadow Treasury Minister Clive Lewis had admitted to constructing biased news reports while working as a BBC journalist. Mr Lewis, a former chief political reporter for the East of England, had made his comments at a Momentum rally in Brighton, the previous September. The Sun on Sunday reported the BBC’s response to Mr Lewis’s comments as simply, ‘Our editorial guidelines ensure impartiality.’¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5439950/labour-frontbencher-clive-lewis-admits-broadcasting-biased-news-reports-while-working-as-bbc-journalist/>

Questions surrounding the amount of time and space afforded to withdrawalist opinion in the BBC's coverage have been raised as an ongoing concern by News-watch since 1999. The BBC regularly defends its news and current affairs output on the basis that it is 'duly impartial', that it has no requirement to balance the two sides of the EU debate, or even, more recently, that *there are no longer two sides*.⁷

However, as this analysis shows, Series 3 of *Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed* used the same methods outlined by Mr Miles – speaker and airtime imbalance, angle and language – to construct a skewed narrative which served to precipitate audience concerns that Brexit would prove complex and costly.

Each programme was the result of careful planning: selecting appropriate themes, choosing suitable guests, interviewing speakers and editing their comments to guide audiences down a precise narrative path. Chris Morris and his team were not bound by the constraints of live radio, where producers rely on the availability of particular guests, and where interviews, particularly on breaking stories, may be unpredictable. Those responsible for producing the series, and for checking each episode against the BBC's editorial guidelines, had sufficient time and space to ensure that the content was balanced and impartial, and that it adequately reflected the views of the majority of the population who voted Leave 2016.

But, whether consciously or unconsciously, speakers offering positive opinions on the possibilities offered by Brexit were consistently marginalised: by the chosen thematic frames which focused unremittingly on 'problem' areas of Brexit; through the limited airtime they were awarded in which to make their case; and by an onslaught of contrary opinion from other guests and from Chris Morris himself, who could only see negatives.

⁷ See, for example, Nick Robinson <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/e846de20-eb41-487a-804a-3cec4299630e> who argued, "The referendum is over. The duty we broadcasters had to "broadly balance" the views of the two sides is at an end. Why? Because there are no longer two sides, two campaigns, two rival sets of spokespeople reading out those focus-grouped slogans."

PART TWO: TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

2.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE PROGRAMMES

Brexit: Guide for the Perplexed was projected as an objective examination of five themes of post-Brexit outcomes, but it was not. The analysis in Part One shows that presenter Chris Morris assembled a cast of main contributors who conveyed, in a word-count ratio of approximately 11:1, an overwhelmingly negative post-2019 picture.

This section analyses the precise nature of this BBC bias against Brexit.

February 19 (impact on medicines): This programme predicted that Brexit was likely to cause a serious degrading of the UK's health and pharmaceuticals sector, and deprive Britons of early access to pioneering medicines. The main guests were Holy Jarman⁸, a political scientist who had co-authored a report about the likely hugely negative impact of Brexit on the UK health sector in the *Lancet*⁹; Leslie Galloway, of the Ethical Medicines Industry Group (EMIG), who was also very keen to emphasise the difficulties of Brexit; the equally-concerned Alasdair Breckenridge, who had served on the UK's regulatory body the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA); and Ajan Reginald, of biotech company Celixir. The first three guests had serious misgivings about the impact of Brexit, and predicted between them that the UK would have to set up its own regulatory system to replace the European Medicines Agency (EMA); that the UK would become a small market to the pharmaceutical companies with pioneering drugs no longer trialled here, and a delay of two years in new medicines appearing; that the regulatory change triggered by Brexit would lead to 'terrible consequences' for patients and clinical research; that the introduction of tariffs would seriously impede drugs trade between the UK and Europe and lead to prices rises; that the UK would lose its lead in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector.

Offset against this barrage of negativity, Ajan Reginald said the UK could align itself with the EMA and this could lead to a speeding up of the regulatory system as well as new entrepreneurship and new commercial opportunities. This, however, was immediately offset by negatives from Mr Morris (detailed below). Ms Jarman conceded – despite her earlier strong warnings – that Brexit could be 'healthy' for the UK, but for this to happen, the government had

⁸ Her biography is here: <https://sph.umich.edu/faculty-profiles/jarman-holly.html>

⁹ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31926-8/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31926-8/abstract)

to do lots that it currently was not, and the implication was that Brexit policies must be strongly modified. Again, as detailed below, Mr Morris made a comment which diluted Ms Jarman's earlier positive point.

A short quote (49 words) was also included from Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, as has already been noted in Part One. He said that his goal was to maintain the highest possible integration between the EU and the UK in the pharmaceuticals sector. This has been classed as 'Pro-Brexit' because Mr Hunt is part of the government pursuing Brexit. But his argument in this case was for continued close integration with the EU drug-testing regime.

For his part, Chris Morris noted in his commentary that Boris Johnson had made during the referendum campaign misleading statements about how much would be spent on the health service if Brexit happened; emphasised that thousands of jobs in the pharmaceuticals regulatory sector were relocating to mainland Europe; said that just about everyone in the health sector worried that the negativities of Brexit heavily outweighed the positives; emphasised that Mr Breckenridge's negative opinions were those of an expert, the intent presumably being to emphasise to listeners that he knew what he was talking about; and Mr Morris also opined that the potential impact of Brexit was so 'silly' (in a negative sense) that 'common sense would surely prevail'.

On the positive side, he acknowledged that Mr Reginald believed that Brexit could be a 'shot in the arm' (but immediately offset this by saying they were 'other bitter Brexit pills to swallow'). Mr Morris was equally negative after Holly Jarman suggested Brexit could be healthy for the UK. He immediately suggested that the government was under so much pressure from interest groups that it was not listening to the needs of the medicines sector.

Overall, Mr Morris featured guests who were predominantly negative about Brexit and did not tell the audience that their opinions were heavily slanted. He compounded this this by claiming that it was hard to find anyone in the sector who thought otherwise.

There was also serious bias by omission. Mr Morris found 'experts' (with his stress on the word 'expert') from the regulatory side of the industry who were deeply negative about prospects. Others are less so. For example, in the *Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice* (October 2017)¹⁰, a group of seven leading industry figures thoroughly assessed post-Brexit prospects and concluded that, provided that certain criteria were met regarding regulation, there was no reason why the sector should not continue to expand and prosper within the UK. They wanted closer integration with the current regime than perhaps some Brexit supporters are advocating,

¹⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5628446/>

but were emphatic that separate outside-the-EU structures could be established which worked. The authors also noted that an indicator of such optimism was that share prices of pharma companies had remained largely stable since the Referendum vote. Mr Morris thus seriously under-represented those in the sector who more closely agreed with Mr Reginald that Brexit is an opportunity¹¹.

Mr Morris is regularly billed in BBC programmes as a reporter in the 'Reality Check' team. He is projected as someone who offers neutral advice on Brexit-related issues. From the opening programme in this series his approach was anything but impartial.

February 20 (Brexit and food): This programme's main contributors foresaw a major negative impact from Brexit on the food sector, including potential food price rises of up to 46 per cent; border and regulatory issues with both Northern Ireland and Scotland; a 'huge' shortage of agricultural labour; and difficulties in opening new markets outside the EU. In the opening sequence, Chris Morris ruled out talking about the EU's central regulatory framework for controlling agriculture, the Common Agricultural Policy – which many say makes food unnecessarily expensive¹² – because he would be 'here until the cows came home'. Arguably this was an immediate example of bias because he ruled out consideration of what many who support Brexit say is one of the main potential benefits of leaving the EU.

His main guest was Cedric Porter, editor of a market intelligence publication called World Potato Markets. Mr Porter said the UK was the world's biggest importer of potatoes – especially of fries from the EU – and that after Brexit, these imports could attract tariffs of 15 per cent. Mr Morris asked whether the UK could in response produce more home-grown crops, and Mr Porter said it could. Mr Morris immediately claimed that the problem with such a change would be that labour to harvest them might not be available because (he implied) of the ending of the free movement of people. Mr Porter noted that potato producing was not labour intensive, but that potato processing was. He added that the future availability of EU labour was 'a massive issue for the whole of the agricultural industry'.

The next guest was Viviane Gravey, an academic with a recent PhD in the importance of EU climate policy¹³. She said potatoes were traded through a global supply chain and that Brexit would involve also leaving all the trade deals signed by the EU. That would mean that if the UK tried to open new markets, for example by selling seed potatoes to Morocco, the UK would face

¹¹ For example: http://www.pmlive.com/pharma_news/surviving_brexit_1136772 by Paul Ranson a consultant at global law firm Morgan Lewis' London Life Sciences Practice

¹² This article discusses the negative impact on food prices of the CAP: <http://commentcentral.co.uk/scheming-eu-corbbyn-sells-out-labour-voters/>

¹³ <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/people/viviane-gravey> Environmental policy dismantling in the EU?

huge tariffs and would likely have to accept more immigrants from the country as a trade-off. It would be 'negotiations all round' and the UK would not necessarily be in a strong position in those talks.

The next section featured a Soho potato café owner who said she was Russian and could thus face changes caused by Brexit. Her contribution (as is explained in Part One), though classed as 'pro-Brexit' because she was optimistic about the future in a programme discussing the impact of Brexit was, however, not about Brexit itself. Cheese writer Patrick McGuigan – chosen because cheese provided toppings for baked potatoes – warned that imported cheese prices were rising because of the low value of the pound in exchange markets, and could become unaffordable post-Brexit because tariffs could be imposed at 40 per cent.

Mr Morris suggested that nowhere was more complex in planning terms than the Irish border. His guest, potato-blogger Aoife Cox, agreed with Mr Morris and said no-one wanted to go back to a hard border. Mr Morris brought back Ms Gravey who warned that there were food-related complexities even in the other devolved areas of the UK, because Scotland, for example, did not want GM crops, yet the UK government negotiations were not taking this into account.

Mr Morris then returned to Cedric Porter. Before doing so he stressed that for most people, an issue was the cost of food. Food prices had already gone up since the referendum 'because of currency fluctuations'. This paved the way for Mr Porter to say that food prices were one of the key Brexit issues. If potato chips went up by 20 per cent, people would ask what was happening. He added that with a lots of things connected with Brexit 'we cannot be definite about anything'. Mr Morris suggested that is why 'we are all so perplexed'. In conclusion, there was an insert by Boris Johnson saying 'where's the carrot', then from Donald Tusk saying there would be no cakes for anyone, only salt and vinegar.

In the section with Mr Porter, Mr Morris's main intent appeared to be first to establish how reliant the UK was on potato imports from the EU, then to suggest that EU labour issues could thwart any attempt for the UK to become more self-sufficient in potato-growing. In the first exchanges with Ms Gravey, he steered her towards spelling out how difficult exporting to alternative (outside the EU) markets such as Morocco would be. In the section with Patrick McGuigan, Mr Morris stressed how high tariffs on Italian cheese could be (up to 46 per cent), introduced that Michael Gove wanted the UK to become 'cheese patriotic' but then invited Mr McGuigan to explain why this was not practical and to stress the uncertainty among cheese producers. In the section about Northern Ireland, he stressed how difficult the border issue was and how big the trade was in both potatoes and dairy products, then amplified this further by claiming there could be food fights even on the 'soft' borders such as that with Scotland. He brought Ms Gravey back into the frame to confirm that GM crops could be an issue with Scotland and to assert her

opinion that the government negotiating strategy was not taking into account differences within the UK.

As Mr Morris moved to the close of the programme, he included more clips from Mr Porter, the first stressing that food issues were vital to the UK, because there was only 60 per cent self-sufficiency and because price rises could hit 20 per cent. The final quote from Donald Tusk that there would no longer cakes but only salt and vinegar further underlined the overall overwhelming air of post-Brexit problems.

Overall, the level of unrelenting negativity is best illustrated by the approach of Mr Morris towards Ms Gravey. He asked her only about opportunities for export growth post-Brexit only in relation to seed potatoes, and Ms Gravey closed that possibility down by talking about Morocco's likely resistance on an entirely speculative basis. Mr Morris chose not to challenge her negative assertions. This was a derisorily narrow exploration.

As already noted, the only brief positive in the programme about the impact of Brexit came from Cedric Porter, who suggested that it might trigger the UK into growing more of its own potatoes to feed the demand for chips. But this was immediately negated by Mr Morris's point about the drying up of EU labour.

February 21 (the impact of Brexit on British Overseas Territories): This programme presented bleakly negative futures for the chosen examples, Gibraltar and Anguilla. With Gibraltar, the chosen 'expert' on Spanish-UK-EU relations projected that post-Brexit, the sovereignty and economic well-being of the island would be seriously under threat. She was (although this was not spelled out to listeners) a heavily-biased advocate of the Spanish perspective. Equal problems for Anguillans were also predicted, including difficulties in importing essential medical supplies, restrictions on their rights and freedom to travel, and a possible end of development aid.

In Gibraltar, Mr Morris's first guest, the chief minister Fabian Picardo, stressed that there would be no dilution or change over sovereignty, despite apparent pressures from within Spain and the EU. Mr Morris's introduced his second contributor Dr Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío as an 'historian of modern Spain.' She claimed that despite Mr Picardo's stance, Spain was in a 'powerful position' to get its way because it was supported by the EU. Dr Peñalba-Sotorrío said she that she believed Spain 'sensed an opportunity' in this respect. Relevant here is that in other

contexts, she has written that the UK, by voting for Brexit had ‘flared’ tensions with Spain¹⁴, and strongly doubted the legitimacy of the UK’s presence in Gibraltar. She was thus, as already noted above, a deeply partisan commentator.

Mr Morris’s next guest was Marlene Hassan Nahon, a daughter of a past Gibraltarian first minister. Mr Morris underlined that if the Spanish became difficult, the border could be a ‘pinch point’. Ms Hassan Nahon said that Gibraltar had strongly wanted to remain a member of the EU to avoid a repeat of past border problems, and claimed that friends had gone into mourning when they had learned the result of the referendum.

The next guest, Joe Garcia, a local journalist, saw a possible positive aspect of Gibraltar’s future outside the EU. He asserted that Gibraltarians had now realised that 90 per cent of their trade was with the UK – in sectors such as gaming and insurance – and saw that this might continue relatively unscathed after leaving the EU. Mr Morris immediately asked him (despite this guarded optimism) what his biggest fear was about Brexit. Mr Garcia said that it was that of being ‘let down’ in the negotiations (presumably referring to compromises about sovereignty). Mr Morris then observed that the island wished to keep its low tax status post-Brexit, because this generated investment. Dr Peñalba-Sotorrío observed that Spain saw this as unfair competition and would try get it stopped while also wanting to take over the island’s airport. With this further negativity as a springboard, Mr Morris asked John Isola, President of the Gibraltar Chamber of Trade, how vital the border being open was to his food and drinks business. Mr Isola agreed that it was vital, and wanted protection post-Brexit through the creation of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

Mr Morris then switched his focus to the isle of Anguilla, which he observed was having tough times as a result of a recent hurricane and – as it was dependent as a conduit for imports the island of Saint Martin, part French and Dutch, and hence EU territory – was now ‘bracing itself’ for Brexit. Blondel Cluff, a native of the island living in London, amplified this by stating that getting vital medical supplies to the island was dependent on access via EU ports on Saint Martin. He added, ‘and of course the EU provides the only main source of Anguilla’s development aid’. Prompted by Mr Morris, he asked that the UK government should not to forget Anguilla in the Brexit negotiations and to make a pact with France and Holland to prevent ‘adverse effects’.

Mr Morris made no attempt to explain (as would have been relevant) what aid was actually received by Anguilla or what the actual source of ‘EU aid’ is (i.e. the net contributors to the EU

¹⁴ Facebook entry: <https://www.facebook.com/HistoryAtMmu/posts/1287569954652982>. Her article for the Conversation <https://theconversation.com/gibraltar-a-history-of-ill-will-over-the-rock-75753> makes it clear that she believes Spain has strong claims over the Rock, and that the Brexit vote had strengthened those claims.

budget, of which the UK is the second largest)¹⁵. He moved on instead to lawyer Susie Alegre, who, he said, specialised in the human rights of those living in BOTs. What he did not say about Ms Alegre is that she is strongly pro-EU and against Brexit¹⁶. He put the points raised by Mr Cluff – that Brexit was raising concern about the free movement of people, goods and services – to Ms Alegre. She amplified that islanders would lose their EU citizenship (which she claimed ‘opened up the world’ to islanders, many of who wanted to leave) because of Brexit, and this could lead to legal challenges which would come to dominate headlines. Mr Morris concluded by observing that Gibraltar might become like Hong Kong, but immediately noted ‘but hang on, we all know what happened to sovereignty there’.

Editorially, Mr Morris selected as his main commentators two ‘experts’, Dr Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío and Susie Alegre, who were deeply biased in favour of the EU and against Brexit. Their partisanship was not spelled out to listeners, and Mr Morris made no attempt to challenge it. With their comments as the lynchpin, as already noted, he instead painted a picture in which, as a result of Brexit, the sovereignty and economic well-being of Gibraltar would likely come under severe pressure and Anguilla would lose ‘EU aid’, the capacity to easily import essential goods, and freedom of movement for its citizens (many of whom, according to Ms Alegre, wanted to leave).

In relation to Gibraltar, the chief minister said that the island would never lose its links to the UK, and the journalist Joe Garcia said 90 per cent of island trade would probably be unaffected because it was with the UK. But these positive points were totally swamped by the overwhelming tide of negativity. It was painted by Mr Morris as an island in mourning and living in fear of Spain.

February 22 (the impact of Brexit on regions and nations of the UK): This programme was constructed to show one-sidedly that the economic problems of the West Midlands could be seriously magnified by a combination of the withdrawal of the perceived benefits of being in the EU (such as tariff-free access to EU-related trade) and by a failure by the government to take into account the needs of the regions of the UK. Chris Morris – revealing his partisanship from the outset – first observed that the regions most likely to take the ‘biggest economic hit’

¹⁵ According to the European Commission €14 million in development aid has been allocated to the island, and additional (unspecified) funds are receive from EU projects designed to help the Caribbean generally in areas such green energy: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/anguilla_en

¹⁶ She has re-tweeted, for example: ‘Your daily reminder that the EU never stopped Leavers from living the lives they wanted. That’s why they can’t name a single tangible benefit of leaving. But Brexit will prevent MILLIONS from living the lives they’ve enjoyed. And millions more from pursuing their dreams.’ https://twitter.com/susie_alegre?lang=en

from Brexit were a long way from London. His first interviewee, Steve Brittan, of BSA tools in Birmingham, said that currently he could export anywhere in next to no time, but his company was also exporting related services as well. The government did not seem to understand this in their conduct of the EU negotiations, because it seemed to refer to them separately. Mr Morris commented after Mr Brittan's description of current trading realities, that this combination of services and manufactured goods was vital to an understanding of the potential impact of Brexit. He added that the 'current uncertainty caused by Brexit' meant that 'many companies were wondering whether the wheels might come off'. The question was:

How well in the future can they trade services as well as goods around the EU, once the UK has left the single market and the customs union?

The next contributor was Philip McCann, joint author of a deeply pessimistic paper on the risks of Brexit from Birmingham University. He explained that services and manufacturing were integrated in complex ways and this could be seriously undermined by Brexit. The problems were compounded because goods and services went across borders multiple times and obstacles to free-flow could now be introduced. Chris Morris asked if these 'other hidden services' were 'far more vulnerable' than the financial services provided by the City of London. Mr McCann replied:

Far more vulnerable, and actually much, much bigger, the scale of the vulnerabilities dwarfs the financial markets.

Mr Morris commented that this meant that areas like the West Midlands, with lots of activities in these services 'have most to lose if trade with Europe is disrupted'. He observed that unpublished assessments by the government had come to 'markedly similar' conclusions. Mr McCann claimed that the implications of Brexit were going to be much more severe in regions such as the West Midlands and the 'North of England', while areas such as Scotland which voted Remain would not be as hard hit. Mr Morris asked why the problems would be caused. Mr McCann said that the affected regions were more dependent on European markets.

Mr Morris suggested that against this, somewhere like the West Midlands was not 'giving up'. There was an 'on your bike' mentality' with the leader of Birmingham City Council being among a delegation from regional cities who had met Michel Barnier in Brussels. Another Birmingham delegation had returned from Leipzig. Paul Forrest, head of research for the Midlands Economic Forum (MEF), said he had been speaking to the German Länders about improving trade and economic ties after Brexit. He added that there was understanding that there was an integrated supply chain, and there had been talks about maintaining this in future. This relied on negotiating skills, and currently there were more gold-medal winning cyclists than trained negotiators.

Chris Morris said that what was required was 'good roads with no barriers', and the concern was that if supply chains were disrupted by border controls 'companies won't be able to move goods as smoothly as they do now'. He noted that Rebecca Jones, also of the MEF, said that 80 percent of HGV traffic was driven by people of non-UK backgrounds. Anything that added to journey times would have a 'huge impact' on exporting and productivity.

Mr Morris said there was plenty to worry about if 'your voice was not the loudest', but Paul Forrest thought the impact of Brexit might not 'be as bad as some people think, but . . .'. Mr Forrest said his concern was that, although the needs of big areas such as Scotland were being taken into account, there was no formal mechanism for the West Midlands to contribute to negotiations. Mr Morris (referring to riding his own bicycle) said this seemed a big mountain to climb, and there followed a clip from Michel Barnier, who said there would be no partnership without common ground in fair competition, state aid and tax dumping.

Mr Morris said the state aid to which Mr Barnier referred was what some believed would help the West Midlands. Businesses hoped state aid would be an answer to "Brexit blues" once the UK was free of Brexit restrictions. Mr Morris then wondered how closely the UK would stick to EU regulations about state aid post-Brexit. He said that Kate Bell of the TUC believed the government 'should be doing more already'. Ms Bell said that the amount of state aid in Europe varied enormously – Germany gave 2.5 times more than the UK. The House of Lords had reported this was holding the UK back – it wasn't EU rules but how the UK was interpreting them. Mr Morris said the regions were hoping that they would not be forgotten in the deal that was reached.

Steve Brittan of BSA – brought in again by Mr Morris – then commented that London was far removed from what was going on in the rest of the country. Mr Morris said that Mr Brittan knew there were trade opportunities with China, 'but nothing comes easy'. Mr Brittan said it took years of building up relationships, it wasn't just knocking on doors. It was likely that the UK would be stung by not having a customs union and so the next phase 'had to be done right' – that is why business was concerned.

Chris Morris said it did feel that he had found other agendas outside London. Mr McCann opined that the UK was now three separate economies – London, Scotland and the rump that was the rest of the UK. The knowledge of what was going on in the latter was not there. Chris Morris concluded:

And if people think there's been a lack of understanding in government, well, that may be one of the reasons why, in places like the West Midlands a majority voted for Brexit

in the first place. [Music: Queen – ‘Bicycle Race’] Why not change gear when you feel like you’re stuck in neutral? But as negotiations on leaving the EU intensify, some parts of the country are finding that they have to peddle harder than others, just to stay in the race. Goodbye.

For this programme, Mr Morris chose as his main contributors a company spokesman from BSA who was deeply concerned about Brexit, and Philip McCann, an economic commentator and academic who had, as already mentioned, jointly written the Birmingham University report which was deeply pessimistic about the impact on the regions of leaving the EU¹⁷. In fact, Mr McCann had been making the same negative points – that the regions would lose out – since before the EU referendum and is clearly in his outlook strongly pro-EU¹⁸. Mr Morris did not make this explicit to listeners. Two of the other main interviewees were Paul Forrest and Rebecca Jones of the Midlands Economic Forum. This body, separately from the programme, has published reports which are much less gloomy about the impact of Brexit than Philip McCann, and also cast strong doubt about the benefits for the UK of EU membership¹⁹. Despite this, the quote he included from Rebecca Jones was negative: about Brexit-triggered changes in the availability of lorry drivers. The contribution of Paul Forrest included an observation that the impact ‘might not be as bad as some people think’, but this was diluted by that the rest of his contribution was edited to focus mainly on his Brexit-related concerns. TUC official Kate Bell’s contribution in line with TUC policy, was to attack the UK government for not doing enough from what she claimed was within existing EU rules to ensure more state aid was available.

Throughout, Mr Morris emphasised pro-EU and anti-Brexit points, and gave only minimal space to the idea that the regions could benefit from Brexit.

February 23 (the ‘transition’): The final programme explored the likely nature and impact of the transition period. In line with the rest of the series it was cast as fraught with problems, including ‘horrendous’ legal problems; that it was like walking a plank with a six-foot extension over a cliff-edge; escalating political tensions within government ranks; the UK stuck in a limbo of being bound by EU laws but not able to influence them; a failure to ‘take back control’, despite the promises made during the EU referendum; and the UK being forced to accept a ‘barebones’ deal to keep planes flying and the continuation of trade.

The opening included a quote from Guy Verhofstadt, leader of the European Parliament, who said this phase could only be an extension of the status quo. Philip Hammond said the same.

¹⁷ Brexit: Local and Devolved Government, published by the ESRC: <http://ukandev.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Brexit-local-and-devolved-government-report.pdf>

¹⁸ As exemplified in comments made to The Guardian about the prospect of a Leave vote: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/21/brexit-widen-north-south-divide-poorest-areas-lose-most-eu>

¹⁹ How the Economics Profession got it wrong on Brexit: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/21/brexit-widen-north-south-divide-poorest-areas-lose-most-eu>

The first main guest, Catherine Barnard, introduced as Cambridge professor of EU law, said most people would not notice the difference between March 29 and 30 in 2019 (after Brexit was reached). Chris Morris noted that it was supposed to be independence day. Ms Barnard said that the transition period would mean the UK stayed in the single market and everything related to the EU would stay the same. Mr Morris asked if the government wanted exceptions. Ms Barnard said the EU was not keen on that and that terms would 'actually be worse' because the UK would not be able to participate in EU institutions and would not have a judge in the ECJ. The UK would become a rule taker, not a rule maker.

Chris Morris commented that businesses would benefit from the certainty, but the legal complexities 'could be horrendous' – and asked whether it might be simpler to stay in the EU for longer. He answered his own question by saying it practically could probably do so, but then wondered whether it would be politically possible.

The next contributor, Mujtaba Rahman, introduced as Europe Director at the Eurasia Group Consultancy, said it would be very difficult for Theresa May 'to walk back' and that would risk serious rebellion on the 'Conservative Right', as well as inflaming those who wanted to Leave, so transition was a 'lesser evil'. There was an insert quote from Jacob Rees-Mogg in which he said a transition stage would make the UK a vassal state. Chris Morris said this was awkward for those who had campaigned to 'take back control'. Mr Rahman suggested that the key point for them was that the UK would have left – that was the prize they wanted to achieve.

Mr Morris suggested that the issue was therefore what amount of 'wobble room' there was with the EU's take it or leave it stance, for example in allowing EU citizens who arrived in the transition period to stay. The third contributor main Aarti Shankar, of the think-tank Open Europe (whose stance towards the EU is outlined in Part One) said it was likely that the government would allow EU citizens to stay, but they would have to register – this was a negotiating point with the EU.

Mr Morris suggested to Ms Shankar that there could be a problem over new EU laws adopted during the transition period. 'over which the UK has had no vote'. Ms Shankar, in response, was objective in how she thought the EU negotiations were going in terms of free movement of citizens and over the status of the UK in relation to EU law during the transition period – whether it would simply have to accept EU law, or could delay implementation, as Norway did. But despite this, Chris Morris spun her approach towards negativity. Mr Morris simply said:

Tricky, and it feels like there could be quite a bit of negotiation still to come on the transition, which is supposed to be part of an overall withdrawal agreement. And as regular listeners may have noticed, it's a bit complicated.

Ms Shankar had hinted neutrally at the possibility of compromise, possibly in these two difficult areas in the UK's favour. But to Mr Morris, it was all still 'tricky' and 'complicated' because negotiations were not yet at the status of an overall withdrawal agreement. Implicitly, he blamed the UK government for that, whereas Ms Shankar did not do so, she accepted that negotiations were continuing. He strengthened his own opinion by including what the announcer said was an 'understatement alert'. He said:

In fact, there's still no guarantee that withdrawal deal including transition will be done. We tend to avoid talking too much about politics in this series and focus on practicalities.

At this point, Mr Morris brought in Mr Rahman again, who warned that because of tensions within the Conservative party, there was no guarantee of a Brexit deal and claimed the government might be forced to accept a 'barebones deal' to keep 'planes flying and trade running'. Mr Morris further amplified his point by observing in response that 'there were high risk to business in all this'. He brought in Catherine Barnard again with a warning that the government 'must face up some difficult choices'. Mr Morris compared the evolving scenario to The Beano comic, with Jacob Rees-Mogg cast as Lord Snooty. This paved the way for him to bring in Diana Zimmermann, of the German television channel ZDF, whose main point was that Brexit was a huge mistake, and then to rebut a claim by Boris Johnson (mentioned by Mr Morris) that Britain could make its way as a confident country. Mr Morris also then brought in again Mr Rahman, who claimed the EU were bored by the negotiations and wanted to move on to re-energising the EU – the Brexit talks with the UK were not their priority.

Mr Morris repeated this, and then asked rhetorically how difficult the overall situation was likely to be. Ms Zimmermann suggested the Germans had said last week that they did not know what Britons wanted – transition or implementation. There were contrasting quotes from Michel Barnier and Theresa May uttering the two words. Mr Morris said that the government insisted on calling it a 'transition period' because it sounded more dynamic. He added that Mr Shankar believed there would not be a lot of new stuff to implement by the time the UK left. She said:

. . . I think the government is tying itself a little bit in knots, when it restates again and again that we are looking to have the agreement finalised. The EU has said very clearly that what we're looking at is a political declaration of what the future relationship will be, and negotiations on that future long-term relationship will take place during a transition.

Mr Morris said that there was thus a lot to do in the next year, and then more in the transition period. He added that Ms Barnard was worried that even after a transition, time would run out. She said it was not clear what would happen and confirmed time could run out. Mr Morris

suggested that could lead to territory visited before, the possibility of a cliff-edge. Ms Barnard agreed and added another metaphor: it was like walking the plank – it had grown to having a six-foot extension. Chris Morris concluded:

. . . supporters of Brexit want to turn that plank into a springboard. (bouncing sound) And they want to know the landing zone – what exactly is transition supposed to be leading to? The trouble is, the whole process has become so fraught and predictions so precarious, that there is a sense that almost anything could happen. Will we be going . . . [Music: Status Quo – ‘Down, Down’] Or will we be . . . [Music: Status Quo – ‘Rockin’ all over the World.’] The thing about status quo is that you don’t really need to know much more than three chords to really nail it. But Brexit, well, it’s turning out to be a polyphonic symphony of mind-boggling complexity. This series had tried to make sense of some of it, but if you’re still perplexed you’re probably not alone. In little more than a year though, the UK is planning on going solo.

An important issue in this programme was that Chris Morris, though stressing Catherine Barnard’s credentials as a professor of European law, did not say that she was in a Jean Monnet post, usually paid for by the EU²⁰. She was strongly anti-Brexit prior to the referendum, and predicted in the Guardian that at least half a million jobs would be lost as a result of an economic downturn²¹.

His second guest, Mujtaba Rahman, was introduced as Europe Director at the Eurasia Group Consultancy²², but he is also a former EU employee in the Directorate of Economic and Financial Affairs, and has also expressed strongly partisan views in favour of the EU and against the UK’s progress towards Brexit²³. Against this background, both their contributions were, unsurprisingly, extremely negative.

Overall, in the final programme, there was no attempt at all to bring positive perspectives at all. It was constructed to deliver an impression of unqualified gloom.

²⁰ The goal of the Jean Monnet higher education project is to study ‘European integration’:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Monnet_Programme

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2016/jun/20/leave-or-remain-the-impact-brexit-would-have-on-uk-jobs>

²² His biography is here: <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/people/mrahman>

²³ <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/29/the-u-k-s-lack-of-direction-is-a-cause-for-concern-as-brexit-talks-enter-final-stage-analysts-say.html>

2.2 POSITIVE POINTS ABOUT BREXIT

This section isolates all the positive points made or prompted by presenter Chris Morris about the post-Brexit world during the five programmes.

February 19: In the programme about the pharma industry, Mr Morris asked Ajan Reginald of Biotech company Celixir if there would be any opportunities post-Brexit, but qualified this by also saying 'as well as risk'. Mr Reginald responded bullishly that the UK had a phenomenal track record of 'producing great science' and this might prompt the UK becoming more enterprising and commercial in the medicines field. Mr Morris acknowledged he had identified a possible 'shot in the arm' but said this was in the context of 'bitter Brexit pills to swallow', and then said that pharmaceutical companies had contingency plans to move out of the UK. At this point he brought in again the political scientist Holly Jarman, who suggested that it was possible to have a 'healthy Brexit', but said that the government must take into account the needs of the health sector much more than it was doing. She claimed this was 'the biggest negotiation of all time' and the government must adopt a more nuanced approach.

February 20: Chris Morris asked potatoes markets commentator Cedric Porter if more potatoes could be grown in the UK, and Mr Porter said that one million more tons could be. Mr Morris offset this by suggesting that it would require EU labour which would not in future be available. Mr Morris asked if more seed potatoes could be exported post-Brexit. His guest said not. Mr Morris in a sequence about a potato café included a comment from the owner, who said she was not afraid of change. Mr Morris immediately switched to the topic of baked potato toppings, which, said his guest, would face price rises of 15 per cent.

February 21: In a 'good news' point about Gibraltar (coming after a 'bad' news one), Chris Morris said that Spain needed a good relationship with the UK (despite their territorial ambitions) post-Brexit because of tourism and investment. Mr Morris asked journalist Jo Garcia if the 90 percent of Gibraltarian trade that was with the UK would continue after Brexit. He replied that it would, but Mr Morris immediately asked what his biggest fear was about Brexit. Later Mr Morris suggested it was a 'big card in Gibraltar's hand' that Spain needed the border open to facilitate movement if their exports and labour. In response, John Isola, of the Gibraltar Chamber of Trade said he was hoping that post-Brexit, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation could be set up.

February 22: Mr Morris suggested that despite big problems being caused by Brexit, the West Midlands was not giving up and the leader of Birmingham City Council had an 'on your bike'

mentality, and had visited Brussels as part of a lobby group. Mr Morris noted that businesses hoped that state aid would be increased after Brexit, perhaps to levels in Germany.

February 23: Discussing the post exit transition period, Mr Morris said that businesses would benefit through the 'certainty' (the transition arrangements would provide), but immediately said the legal ramifications could be 'horrendous'.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Chris Morris, as already noted appears as the BBC 'Reality Checker' in relation to EU issues. It was not specifically said that he was presenting the series in that capacity, but regular listeners to Radio 4 would have been aware of his role. He is projected editorially as being especially objective and balanced in his outlook and approach. Yet in this series, it is established in the analysis above that he was far from objective or impartial.

As already noted in Part One, these programmes, were pre-recorded and pre-edited, and so the content was entirely decided by the production team. The 'Reality Check' role – recently introduced by the BBC as a self-declared means of ostensibly checking out the veracity of claims by both sides in the EU debate – seems to have evolved into something altogether different.

Evident here is that instead, Chris Morris and the programme team assembled in a number ratio of 6:1 and word-count imbalance of 11:1 a group of main contributors who had serious concerns about the Brexit process. Between them, strongly encouraged by Mr Morris, they warned of a blizzard of post-Brexit problems, including the British pharmaceuticals sector facing serious difficulties, food prices escalating, the sovereignty of Gibraltar coming under severe, unprecedented threat from Spain, the regions of Britain facing severe economic hardship because of the ending of the single market, and a transition period in which the UK would be forced to accept laws from Brussels without a say.

This negativity was compounded because Chris Morris was not completely candid about the backgrounds of contributors. Many of them, as is established above, were introduced simply as commentators in their respective areas of expertise, but in reality they were strongly pro-EU and anti-Brexit in their respective outlooks. Their contributions to the programme reflected this.

The bias of the contributors was amplified at almost every turn by Mr Morris, whose commentary and opinions made up 49 per cent of the programme time. He frequently made comments or observations supporting their views. The section above about his handling of positive perspectives shows starkly that countervailing opinions or views were seriously under-represented.

The BBC's 'Reality-Checking' about Brexit seems thus to have become a framework of adding to the bias of contributors and the production team the biased opinions of the presenter. As such, the approach warrants direct comparison with George Orwell's *Ministry of Truth*, portrayed in his novel 1984.

APPENDIX — TRANSCRIPTS

Series 3, Episode 1, 'Medicines', 19 February 2018, 12pm

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the latest series of Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed – revealing what's really at stake in the Brexit negotiations. Previously we've covered everything from trade to divorce bills, nuclear power and immigration, how Brexit could affect Scotland and Ireland, all still available online. First in this new series, Chris Morris discovers how Brexit could affect our health.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hello and welcome to Series 3. We've become accustomed, haven't we, to a rather familiar Brexit soundtrack.

(whistling)

THERESA MAY: Brexit means Brexit.

MICHEL BARNIER: Just the clock ticking.

DAVID DAVIS: Frictionless access to the single market.

UNKNOWN: That's not good enough Mr Speaker.

(whistling)

CHRIS MORRIS: It feels like everything's up for grabs and everyone is competing for a bit of Brexit attention. But in this programme we try to move to a different beat. (*sound of jukebox*) which is why we've rigged up a Radio 4 Brexit jukebox to guide us along the way, and provide us with our daily theme tune.

Music: Snoop Dogg featuring Willie Nelson – 'My Medicine'

CHRIS MORRIS: Ah yes, medicine. Well a lot of people want to know what Brexit might mean for the NHS, but that's partly because of misleading slogans written on the sides of busses.

BORIS JOHNSON: The £350 million.

CHRIS MORRIS: And warnings that we're going to run out of nurses. But what about the drugs themselves?

Music: Snoop Dogg featuring Willie Nelson – 'My Medicine'

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, where better to start than amidst the gleaming steel and concrete of Canary Wharf in London's Docklands? This is the headquarters of the European Medicines Agency, but not for much longer. Because of Brexit the agency is moving to Amsterdam, taking 900 jobs with it, as well as all the business that surrounds it. They didn't want to give us an interview, but an online video featuring a reassuring voice tells us what the EMA does.

VOICEOVER: Working closely with the national authorities, its scientists assess, supervise and monitor medicines long before they appear in pharmacies and hospitals. And all the time, while they're on sale (*fades out*)

CHRIS MORRIS: Sounds good, but the EMA only covers countries in the EU and the European Economic Area, so it looks like the British government will have to set up its own parallel system, regulating the approval and use of medicines after Brexit. What might that mean for you and me. Holly Jarman is one of the co-authors of a study of the impact of Brexit on healthcare, which appeared in *The Lancet* magazine.

HOLLY JARMAN: The difficulty in terms of changing the way that we regulate medicines, how we look at their safety and their efficacy is that our market is quite small compared to the very large EU market, so there is the risk that pharmaceutical companies would look at our small market and say, 'That's not really a priority, we want to develop drugs and have them released in a bigger market like the EU first, and then we will address smaller markets like the UK would be.'

CHRIS MORRIS: So, this is not just about patients, it's also about profits. Drugs companies always go for big markets first, because bringing a new medicine to market can be a 10 to 12 year process, time-consuming and expensive. They need to get their money back. Leslie Galloway is the chairman of the Ethical Medicines Industry Group, which represents small and medium-sized pharmaceutical companies. Its members provide about 50% of the branded medicines given to patients in the NHS.

LESLIE GALLOWAY: If the UK leaves the EMA, essentially, a company would have to do one submission for 30 countries, and one submission for one country, so which do you think is going to happen first? The sad consequences are that the EU will take priority over the UK and this means that new medicines would be launched in the UK up to two years after they'd been launched in mainland Europe.

CHRIS MORRIS: We would have to wait to get the best new medicines?

LESLIE GALLOWAY: That's right. That has terrible consequences patients, it has serious consequences for clinical research. If you haven't launched your medicine in the UK, why would you want to set up a clinical trial? If your main comparator is not available in the UK, why would you want to do a clinical trial there?

CHRIS MORRIS: Right, well that's not a desperately good start. No wonder the government has hinted that it wants to stay as close to European regulation as it can, if not in the EMA, then hugging it pretty darn tight. But that would keep a key part of the UK economy, worth an estimated £30 billion every year, under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

ANNOUNCER (*buzzer sound*) ECJ Alert!

CHRIS MORRIS: Yes, and even that might not rule out delays entirely, and the government knows it. Still, you can't really have a health crisis these days without hearing from Jeremy Hunt.

JEREMY HUNT: We think patients benefit from the highest possible levels of integration between the UK and European pharmaceutical industry, so that's the case that we will be making to the EU in the negotiations. Obviously, it takes two to tango in these discussions, but that will be our preferred outcome.

CHRIS MORRIS: Have we got any tango on the jukebox?

(*jukebox sounds*) Music: Louis Armstrong – 'It take two to tango'

CHRIS MORRIS: Lovely, so the plan is to try to stay in step with the EU on medicines, not least because for the pharmaceutical industry, 'No deal' would be the worst of all worlds. When the UK's outside the single market and the customs union. Leslie Galloway again.

LESLIE GALLOWAY: Every month, 45 million packs of medicine leave the UK for mainland Europe, and in the same month 37 million come from the EU into the UK. Think about tariffs, customs, delays, the queues, in terms of tariffs there are significant issues for the NHS, potentially, if medicines coming into the country are going to be more expensive.

CHRIS MORRIS: What kinds of medicines would we be talking about there, I mean, are these things that people would know about in their daily lives?

LESLIE GALLOWAY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, this is getting a bit silly now, surely common sense will prevail, especially because . . .

ALASDAIR BRECKENRIDGE: If we go along the hard Brexit route, then it's a lose-lose situation, it's not good for us, clearly, and it's not good for them.

CHRIS MORRIS: In fact, roughly 40% of the testing of drugs that the EMA has to do is subcontracted to the UK, to our very own Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, the MHRA. The UK is a global leader in the field, centre of excellence, upon which the rest of Europe depends, but that still doesn't make Brexit easy.

ALASDAIR BRECKENRIDGE: I'm Alasdair Breckenridge, I'm a clinical pharmacologist, I chaired the MHRA, the UK regulatory authority for ten years, until 2013.

CHRIS MORRIS: In other words, he knows what he's talking about, he's an expert.

ALASDAIR BRECKENRIDGE: The MHRA is one of the biggest medicines regulatory authorities in Europe, it's a very, very well-funded group, but it's a challenge for it, it's got to fill in all the gaps that are left from leaving Europe as well as setting up new regulatory patterns and pathways, and that's just for medicines, because it also regulates medical devices, and what the implications of that are, for Brexit are really very profound.

CHRIS MORRIS: Let's be honest, just about everyone you talk to in the health sector is worried that on the Brexit balance sheet, the negatives outweigh the positives.

ANNOUNCER (*gong sound*) Brexit – Perplexit!

CHRIS MORRIS: So, here's a big question, could more flexibility be built into a new system? A regime better suited to cutting-edge medical research, and commercial development? The current system of drug regulation emerged in the 60s and 70s in the aftermath of the crisis surrounding thalidomide, the morning sickness drug that caused thousands of babies around the world to be born with severe disabilities.

ALASDAIR BRECKENRIDGE: The drugs then were largely chemicals, now, all the important drugs are biologics, based on understanding the human genome. They are more effective, they are able to cure diseases like some forms of cancer, some forms of infection, and the demand of doctors and patients is to ask for these drugs earlier than the long period of regulatory approval, which was conventional under the old chemicals system. We have got a chance now to take the regulatory system, re-examine it and say, 'Is this fit for purpose for the new drugs which are coming on the scene, and which are going to be even more important in the future.'

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, what could that mean in practice? Ajan Reginald is the chief executive of Celixir, a biotech company that developed cells which regenerate parts of the body that are damaged.

AJAN REGINALD: One of the potential opportunities with Brexit would be for us to align with the EMA on everything they do, but perhaps introduce our own regulatory framework which would accelerate these innovative new therapies, whether they be cell or gene therapies or other therapies. If there is a regulatory pathway that allows us to accelerate that, of course we're excited by that. We have a lot of patients in the UK that could benefit from heart failure treatment or from other treatments that we have in development, and it would be great for us as a UK company, we invented the technology here, we developed the technology here, and we're based here, we'd love to be able to bring this medicine to UK patients as quickly as possible.

CHRIS MORRIS: And we have, in not just your company, but a history of cutting-edge research, clear global expertise, sometimes change brings opportunity as well as risk?

AJAN REGINALD: Absolutely, in the UK we have a phenomenal track record of producing great science, and we have a great record of even thinking about how to apply that science, to be balanced. We're not as good as, perhaps, the US in how we commercialise science, so perhaps, I don't know, we are speculating perhaps, Brexit will give us more of an entrepreneurial culture that we need, so that we can actually commercialise some of the technology ourselves.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, there is a chance, in the longer term, of a shot in the arm, not just a series of bitter Brexit pills to swallow. For the moment though, the focus has to be on the here and now. Already, big pharmaceutical companies have contingency plans ready to roll, to move the marketing authorisation for several thousand drugs out of the UK and into Europe to ensure that they can continue to trade in the EU market. Certainty is required on the regulation of medicines, and choices have to be made soon. Professor Holly Jarman again.

HOLLY JARMAN: I think it . . . it is possible to have a healthy Brexit, but it does require the government to do several things and do them very well.

CHRIS MORRIS: And you've said it's really important that the government prioritises health in the negotiations. The trouble is, that's what the car industry is saying, it's what the farmers are saying . . .

HOLLY JARMAN: *(speaking over)* Yes, yes.

CHRIS MORRIS: . . . it's what the chemical industry's saying. Everybody says, 'we should be a priority' and everybody can't win.

HOLLY JARMAN: Exactly. That's what happens in a negotiation and this is one of the biggest negotiations of all time. There have to be trade-offs. The government has to make a choice, it has to think about the implications for health in a more nuanced way, I think, and really decide, 'we will prioritise the NHS which is something that the British people care a lot about'.

CHRIS MORRIS: Healthcare and the NHS are just on the tip of everyone's tongue, aren't they? In that sense the overlap with Brexit can't really be ignored?

HOLLY JARMAN: No, the overlap between the NHS and the complexities of Brexit definitely can't be ignored, this is a huge issue.

OLYMPICS 2012 ANNOUNCER: Please welcome Mike Oldfield and the staff of the United Kingdom National Health Service. (*Music: Mike Oldfield – Tubular Bells*)

HOLLY JARMAN: No other country but Britain would put, right in the middle of the Olympic opening ceremony a whole section celebrating the NHS, with nurses jumping on beds, that importance makes this a political hot potato in a way that it might not otherwise have been.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hot potato indeed, and in the next programme, not just a hot one but a baked potato with tariff toppings, as we examine how Brexit might affect some of our favourite food. Goodbye.

Series 3, Episode 2, 'Food', 20 February 2018, 12pm

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the latest series of *Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed*, revealing what's really at stake in the Brexit negotiations. Previously we've covered everything from trade to divorce bills, nuclear power and immigration; how Brexit could affect Scotland and Ireland, all still available online. In this new series, Chris Morris now discovers how Brexit could affect our food.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hello. Brexit has always given us plenty of food for thought, so I thought: food. The trouble is, if we try to pick apart the entire common agricultural policy, we'll be here until the cows come home. Which is one of the reasons I've come down to Hadlow College in rural Kent.

UNNAMED SPEAKER (*Possibly Cedric Porter*): A fascinating time to be a student of agriculture, they'll all be trying to get their heads round Brexit and what it might mean for them.

CHRIS MORRIS: And what it might mean for the rest of us, and the food we put on our plates. I wonder what our Brexit jukebox has got on the menu today?

Song: One potato, two potato, through potato, four.

CHRIS MORRIS: Okay, not quite what I was expecting. Potatoes?

CEDRIC PORTER: Yep, the potato will be on the table in the Brexit negotiations.

CHRIS MORRIS: And fortunately, I'm joined here in the farm shop at Hadlow College by Cedric Porter, editor of world potato markets.

CEDRIC PORTER: Yep, I've got a great Kent Potato in my hand.

CHRIS MORRIS: A Great Kent?

CEDRIC PORTER: A great . . . well, no, it's a Marfona potato, it's grown in Kent . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: And how easy is it to say what Brexit means, for this potato?

CEDRIC PORTER: So, to the noble tuber. Brexit will have an impact, I think quite a big impact on the potato, we're one of the world's largest importers of potatoes, particularly in the form of frozen chips and fries.

CHRIS MORRIS: And a lot of those imports come from elsewhere in the EU, from Belgium, the Netherlands?

CEDRIC PORTER: Yep, the imports of fries or chips, over 90% of that comes from Belgium and the Netherlands, so both EU countries, both massive suppliers, and we are absolutely vital to their markets, in both cases, we're the largest single market for their products.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, another cunning Brussels plot: flooding is with their *frit* – but if we end up with a 'no deal' Brexit, what then? Well, under WTO rules, your frozen fries would attract a tariff of about 15%.

CEDRIC PORTER: Which would have a big impact on exports for the Dutch and the Belgians, and also the cost of the product for the UK shoppers.

ANNOUNCER (*alarm sounds*) Price Rise Alert!

CHRIS MORRIS: It's a key point, because the interests of consumers and producers aren't always the same, but given that the Netherlands is already running out of planting room, close to peak potato, could we produce more here?

CEDRIC PORTER: Yeah, we import the equivalent of over 2 million tonnes of potatoes. Even if we cut that by a million tonnes, we could cope with that, we've got plenty of land to do that, and there would be the farmers who would gladly increase that production, if the price was right.

CHRIS MORRIS: Of course, more land you farm, the more people you need to work on it, and that gets us to the issue of European labour, which may go down as a result of Brexit?

CEDRIC PORTER: The actual growing of potatoes isn't that labour-intensive, the key issue is when you're sorting out the good potatoes from the bad potatoes, and then also the processing, that's where that EU labour is. So this is a massive issue for the whole of the agricultural industry, and the food industry as well, in terms of finding that labour.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, plenty of potato-related imports at stake, whether it's chips or people. But what about exports? The spuds we sell abroad.

VIVIANE GRAVEY: Your potato is part of a whole . . . agri-food supply chain. It's not just your farmer producing potatoes that are sold locally in the village, it's part of a global supply chain.

CHRIS MORRIS: Viviane Gravey is a French academic based at Queens University in Belfast. She says Brexit may have an effect on potato sales well beyond Europe.

VIVIANE GRAVEY: One thing we need to remember is when you are leaving the EU, you're not just leaving trading arrangements between the EU and the UK, you're also leaving all of the trade deals currently signed by the EU.

CHRIS MORRIS: For example, in terms of our seed potato . . .

VIVIANE GRAVEY: Hm-hmm.

CHRIS MORRIS: Exports, we export to Morocco, but Morocco levies a massive tariff on potatoes if it's not part of an EU deal or any other trade deal it's already done, so, we can't simply say, 'Right, we'll carry on the exports, but outside the EU'?

VIVIANE GRAVEY: Definitely. And you have to understand as well that the UK would be in a weaker position. Morocco would say, 'Well, you want to export those potatoes, if you don't want me to levy the tariff on them, if you want to make a deal, then perhaps you need to allow more Moroccans into the UK, or be more open to any kind of products that Morocco would want to export into the UK market.' So it's negotiation all round, and the UK would not necessarily be the strong one in these negotiations.

CHRIS MORRIS: Talking about trade always makes me hungry, so I've come to, where else? The Potato Project in Soho in central London.

KSENIA KARPENKO: Having a grandma that knows 50 ways to cook a potato, I definitely thought that this is interesting, plus it's a British staple, so . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Ksenia Karpenko is co-founder of this gourmet potato café, concerned about Brexit and the potential effect on prices, but not put off by it.

KSENIA KARPENKO: Definitely the menu will be changing, that's the best thing about the creativity. Since my background is Russian, I'm not afraid of changes.

CHRIS MORRIS: No, you've lived through a few, this is true.

KSENIA KARPENKO: (*laughs*)

CHRIS MORRIS: You've got a jacket upon the board there, with blue cheese on one shoulder, cheddar cheese on another shoulder, and mozzarella around the collar, what's all that about?

KSENIA KARPENKO: We suggest our customers make their own jacket and erm . . . the cheeses are the . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Oh, *jacket*, I get it – I'm too slow!

KSENIA KARPENKO: There you go. There you go. Er, the cheese is erm (*fades out*)

CHRIS MORRIS: A timely reminder that it's not just the jacket potato you have to consider, it's the toppings you want with it.

PATRICK MCGUIGAN: So, er, my name's Patrick McGuigan, I'm a freelance food journalist and I specialise in cheese, but I also set up a cheese festival called the London Cheese Project.

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, we've already discovered that Brexit is pretty big in the world of potatoes, I presume it's quite big in the world of cheese too?

PATRICK MCGUIGAN: Yeah, it's definitely having an influence. I was talking to a cheesemaker the other day, who's based in London, an urban cheesemaker who was telling me that the day after the referendum, a lot of the Italian cheeses that would be competitors to her products went up by sort of 10 to 15%, almost overnight. So, for her as a British cheesemaker, you know, that was, on one hand, quite good news. But there are also drawbacks to British cheesemakers, because a lot of the stuff they use to make cheese, sort of ancillary products are sourced from Europe.

CHRIS MORRIS: And of course, if in the future there was no deal at all, you're then talking about tariffs, and I think it's 46% on Italian similar, roughly 40% on Irish cheddar. If you wanted to put some cheese on one of the potatoes in the shop, it could cost you a lot more money?

PATRICK MCGUIGAN: Yeah, I mean that, that would be absolutely massive. Of course, I would say: buy British cheese, there's some brilliant British cheeses out there, but, do you know what, there's also some amazing French cheeses and Spanish cheeses and Italian cheeses. I don't want to give up eating Comté or Gorgonzola or Manchego, and it'd be a real shame if they became so expensive we couldn't buy them.

CHRIS MORRIS: Now, you may think this is getting too cheesy already, but have a listen to this lot.

MICHAEL GOVE: I'm going to say, one of the things (*word or words unclear*) I'm deeply concerned about your patriotic attitude towards cheddar.

CHRIS MORRIS: Yes, it's Michael Gove, at a parliamentary committee.

MICHAEL GOVE: We're pro-UK cheddar, whether it's Orkney or whether, as I say, it's West Country cheddar.

UNNAMED SPEAKER: Yes, and Somerset brie and Cornish cheese (*fades out*)

CHRIS MORRIS: Of course, in extremis, the government could choose to waive tariffs on imported food unilaterally, but patriotic cheese? Patriotic potatoes?

PATRICK MCGUIGAN: If only it was that simple, if we all just bought British, everything would be okay, but it's far more complicated than that. All of the food sector is not quite sure whether to invest or not at the moment. Do we go for exports? Do we focus on the . . . our home market? These are questions that businesses have to sort of think about all the time, but it makes planning quite difficult, and when you're not quite sure if we're looking at 40% tariffs or not.

CHRIS MORRIS: Nowhere is that planning more difficult than at the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, a real Brexit frontline where everyone wants to avoid the imposition of customs checks, food safety checks and so on, but no one is entirely sure how it can be done. Aoife Cox lives in Dublin, where she founded the potato-obsessed website The Daily Spud.

AOIFE COX: The potato is, you could consider it as a microcosm of agri-food in general, beef and dairy they're the big chunks of that sector, but things go back and forth across the . . . the border all the time, I mean, there's not just fresh potatoes, but there's the various processed potato products, like crisps, which would be a big one. Ireland is a huge market for UK exports of crisps.

CHRIS MORRIS: And if that's true for potatoes, it's . . . even more true for the stuff we want to put on potatoes, isn't it? For butter, for cheese?

AOIFE COX: Oh, oh, absolutely. Dairy is huge, and dairy and spuds – that's a marriage made in heaven.

CHRIS MORRIS: And if we want to keep an eye on what Brexit is going to mean for the potato, then we have to keep a very close eye on that Irish border.

AOIFE COX: Oh, absolutely. I suppose, you know, even just from a personal point of view, it's all about the border. No one wants to go back to a hard border.

CHRIS MORRIS: But even where there are no borders within the UK, there could still be food fights because devolution is such a hot potato. And, says Viviane Gravey, the EU's common agricultural policy is not one-size-fits-all.

VIVIANE GRAVEY: Currently, what you have is the policy that is implemented differently in the UK and in France, but also within the UK, between England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

CHRIS MORRIS: And, to take one example of how that could become complicated – GM crops, I suppose?

VIVIANE GRAVEY: Yes, so currently what you have is, under EU law you've got the possibility for the four different nations to opt out of growing GM crops, and everyone but England has done so. But, of course, the UK, when it comes to central government is going to be the one doing the trade negotiation. We hear very little about how would the devolved be allowed to weigh in, to be consulted on how the UK government negotiates on trade deals or any kind of international agreements.

CHRIS MORRIS: And yet, we know for example that Scotland, certainly, doesn't want GM potatoes.

VIVIANE GRAVEY: It definitely does not. Food, in general, is something that people can get exercised about a lot, and I'm not just saying that as a French person – in the UK you can see it as well. So you have lots of these constitutional problems around who gets to decide what after Brexit that will, I think, solidify around issues like potatoes, like cheese.

CHRIS MORRIS: I hope the cheese doesn't solidify too much . . .

VIVIANE GRAVEY: You can always melt it.

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, you *can*, but whether it's hard or soft cheese or hard or soft Brexit, the key question for many people is how much is it going to cost? Because of currency fluctuations, the price of imported food has already gone up since the referendum, the longer-term trend says Cedric Porter, could be make or break Brexit.

CEDRIC PORTER: I think food prices could be one of the key Brexit issues. This will be what affects the shopper, the consumer at home. We're only 60% self-sufficient in food, so we need to import a lot of food, and if you're seeing people say, 'Since Brexit the price of my cheese, or the price of my chips have gone up 10%, 20%, what's happening?' That could be a key issue for the politicians.

CHRIS MORRIS: But to say definitively now they will go up or they will go down, that's impossible?

CEDRIC PORTER: I think there are a lot of things about Brexit, we can't be definitive about anything . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: That's why we're all so perplexed.

CEDRIC PORTER: *(laughs)* We're still within that terms of negotiations, and people have to eat food every day, so they see the cost of food, and the availability of food, and that's always a key issue for them.

CHRIS MORRIS: So far, food has risen only occasionally to the top of the negotiating agenda.

JOURNALIST: Where is the clarity, where are the clear answers?

BORIS JOHNSON: Where is the carrot?

JOURNALIST: The clarity.

BORIS JOHNSON: The clarity, okay got it. Carrot!

CHRIS MORRIS: Earlier, after much discussion of cake, there was this famously cryptic comment from the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

DONALD TUSK: There will be no cakes on the table, for anyone. There will be only salt and vinegar.

CHRIS MORRIS: Perhaps that's why Theresa May is giving up crisps for Lent – it's all part of a secret Brexit negotiation that none of us understands. But the real moral of this story may be far simpler – you can't have your potato and eat it. Goodbye.

Series 3, Episode 3, 'Gibraltar', 21 February 2018, 12pm

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the latest series of *Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed* – revealing what's really at stake in the Brexit negotiations. Previously we've covered everything from trade to divorce bills, nuclear power and immigration, how Brexit could affect Scotland and Ireland, all still available online. In this new series, Chris Morris now discovers how Brexit could affect British overseas territories.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hello, what does Brexit mean for the BOTS? No, not the Russian ones that run the internet, the British Overseas Territories, remnants of Empire? In this program, we're taking a break from Brexit Britain and heading for some winter sun. And when it comes to a theme tune:

Music: Ella Fitzgerald – 'Solid as a Rock'

CHRIS MORRIS: Our Brexit Perplexit jukebox is always happy to oblige. Gibraltar certainly sees itself as Top of the BOTS, roughly 30,000 people live clustered around the rock that guards the entrance to the Mediterranean. And in Gibraltar, Article 50 is still less important than Article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht. In 1713, Spain signed over sovereignty of the rock to Britain, and appears to have regretted it ever since. For the last 30 years or so, the dispute has been somewhat muted by shared Spanish and British membership of the EU. But Brexit is reviving some old Gibraltarian fears. I'm standing on Winston Churchill Avenue, clue that it is very British here, in fact, in this case it's Spain that wants to take back control. But the chief minister, Fabian Picardo says that is never going to happen.

FABIAN PICARDO: Gibraltar will never be Spanish. It's not going to be Spanish in four years . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Okay.

FABIAN PICARDO: . . . in 40 years . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Fair enough.

FABIAN PICARDO: In 400 years.

CHRIS MORRIS: Blimey.

FABIAN PICARDO: In 4000 years, or in any other longer period of time.

CHRIS MORRIS: Stephen Hawking, eat your heart out.

FABIAN PICARDO: 'Never' means 'Never'. 'No' means 'No', and Brexit changes nothing.

CHRIS MORRIS: Except Brexit does change things a bit.

ANNOUNCER: The bad news for Gibraltar:

CHRIS MORRIS: The other 27 EU countries now say any arrangement between the EU and Gibraltar after Brexit has to be agreed separately by the UK and Spain. That sounds like a step towards shared sovereignty, but . . .

ANNOUNCER: The good news for Gibraltar:

CHRIS MORRIS: Is that Spain values and needs its relationship with the UK more broadly, it's about investments, tourism and about Spanish citizens in Britain. Nevertheless, Dr Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío, a historian of modern Spain thinks Madrid senses an opportunity.

MERCEDES PEÑALBA SOTORRÍO: Right now, Spain is in a very powerful position, for the first time in years. It's the first time that the EU is getting behind Spain on the issue of Gibraltar, and they need to take advantage of that. So I think they will. The problem is that the Gibraltar government, especially with Fabian Picardo there, who has a very, very fiery rhetoric, might not make things easy between the UK government and the Spanish government.

CHRIS MORRIS: At the moment, the political crisis in Catalonia may mean Spain has more pressing issues of sovereignty on its mind, but in Gibraltar, there's always one obvious pinch point. Well, right now, I'm standing next to the frontier with Spain, it's the evening rush hour and it's a hive of activity, hundreds of people are walking back home, passing through the border crossing, after a day's work here in Gibraltar. There's a steady stream of cars and motorbikes forming an orderly queue, because this is currently an internal border within the European Union. But when Britain leaves the EU, so too does Gibraltar, people with long memories know how difficult this frontier can be.

MARLENE HASSAN NAHON: If you live in a place that is four or five square kilometres, you don't have much scope for getting out, for opening your mind, for cultural diversity, it was a very closed-in place to grow up in.

CHRIS MORRIS: Marlene Hassan Nahon was the young daughter of the then Chief Minister, when the Gibraltar border was closed for years by Spain, under the Franco dictatorship.

MARLENE HASSAN NAHON: I remember on Sundays we would drive round and round the rock and see the monkeys again and again, or go to the same restaurant week after week.

CHRIS MORRIS: And that collective memory of a closed border, it's kind of still buried . . . deep in the psyche, or perhaps not so deep?

MARLENE HASSAN NAHON: It's not so deep, I mean, it was only barely 30 years ago.

CHRIS MORRIS: And that's one of the reasons why EU membership has been so popular here, a massive 96% voted Remain in the Brexit referendum, and there was huge shock when the UK voted to leave.

MARLENE HASSAN NAHON: The atmosphere of disaster and grief was absolutely palpable. One of my good friends met me for breakfast, she was dressed in a black dress, crying her eyes out, completely shocked.

CHRIS MORRIS: The initial fear? Basically that the rock could fall off a cliff.

(screaming sound effect)

CHRIS MORRIS: That outside the single market, Gibraltar would be crushed.

(sound of something crashing to floor)

CHRIS MORRIS: But when it comes to its all-important services sector, especially finance . . .

JOE GARCIA: Somehow we had not realised or we had not considered it, 90% of our trade is with Britain.

CHRIS MORRIS: Veteran Gibraltar journalist, Joe Garcia.

JOE GARCIA: For example, online gaming, people who bet online in Britain, 60% of those bets actually come through Gibraltar, I mean, people don't realise this. I mean, in car insurance, when you're out in Britain, look around, one out of every six cars are insured in Gibraltar.

CHRIS MORRIS: And crucially, all of that can continue in or out of the European Union?

JOE GARCIA: That's right.

CHRIS MORRIS: And your biggest fear when it comes to Brexit?

JOE GARCIA: One thing, very simple: not to be let down.

CHRIS MORRIS: A big part of that for Gibraltarians is to protect the low tax regime that attracts so many businesses in the first place. But, as Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío explains, Spain simply sees it as unfair competition.

MERCEDES PEÑALBA SOTORRÍO: They probably will use this to try and get Gibraltar to stop being what they call a tax haven, because thanks to its inclusion into the European Common Area, but not having certain laws apply there, it can offer better conditions for companies in Spain, and then they actually operate in Spain but from Gibraltar soil. I think one of the main priorities is to stop that.

CHRIS MORRIS: Madrid may also have half an eye on the future of Gibraltar airport, and on the status of the rock during a post-Brexit transition. If things get heated, well, we've already had Michael Howard channelling memories of the Falklands War, and the Sun updating its classic early 90s headline . . .

ANNOUNCER (*in shouting, working class voice*) 'Up yours Delors!'

CHRIS MORRIS: . . . for the benefit of Spain.

ANNOUNCER: 'Up yours, Senors!'

CHRIS MORRIS: But on the ground, local businesses are trying to get on with life. John Isola is managing director of Anglo-Hispano, and President of the Gibraltar Chamber of Commerce.

JOHN ISOLA: Basically, we import and distribute wines, spirits, beers, foods etcetera, and also operate a number of restaurants in Gibraltar.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, the Spain-Gibraltar border being relatively open - absolutely mission-critical for your business?

JOHN ISOLA: Yes, principally because we import most of the goods that we sell in Gibraltar through the land border, and also because quite a number of our employees reside in Spain, and come into Gibraltar on a daily basis across the border.

CHRIS MORRIS: Which is a big card in Gibraltar's hand, because local Spaniards need it just as much as it needs them. There is pragmatic cross-border co-operation, and whatever happens politically with Brexit they hope to keep that going using something called . . .

ANNOUNCER (*buzzer*) EU acronym alert!

CHRIS MORRIS: . . . something called an EGTC.

JOHN ISOLA: An EGTC is a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, and basically is a body that can be created across the border to cope with infrastructure issues that separate

to communities. We think that we can actually create an EGTC, sharing some of the costs that we have in terms of infrastructure, for example, or even communication.

CHRIS MORRIS: Because they exist not just within the EU, one example is an EGTC between Hungary, inside the European Union and Ukraine outside?

JOHN ISOLA: That's correct. This example that you've just given demonstrates that it is possible to have an EGTC even after we leave the EU.

CHRIS MORRIS: Basically, it's all about practicalities first, politics second?

JOHN ISOLA: Absolutely.

CHRIS MORRIS: Small steps, but if you think Gibraltar's challenge is complex, spare a thought for those British citizens who are even further flung.

BLONDEL CLUFF: There are only four borders, direct borders with the EU. The UK's, Ireland's, Gibraltar and Anguilla.

CHRIS MORRIS: Yes, Anguilla, another BOT. It may be a remote island, thousands of miles away, but it still has a border with the EU on the open sea. To find out more, we've broken the BBC's BOT bank account to head for the Caribbean. Well, actually we couldn't afford it, so we had to rely on our Brexit jukebox in the studio.

(Unknown Music plays)

CHRIS MORRIS: But these are tough times for Anguilla – devastated by Hurricane Irma last year, dependent on neighbouring islands with links to other EU countries, it's now bracing for Brexit. Blondel Cluff is Anguilla's representative in London.

BLONDEL CLUFF: We are four miles away, effectively, from Metropolitan France, in the guise of the French side of the island of Saint Martin, which is a collectivity of France, and an outermost region of the EU.

CHRIS MORRIS: And what does that mean in practice, in terms of your relationship with the EU?

BLONDEL CLUFF: For us, it's pretty essential, because we are not a self-sufficient island, we rely very heavily on our French and Dutch neighbours to survive. International accesses through French and Dutch Saint Martin, we rely upon them for essential diagnostics such as MRI scanning, cancer medicines and the like, and of course, the EU provides the only main source of Anguilla's developmental aid.

CHRIS MORRIS: So what are you calling for the British government to do?

BLONDEL CLUFF: First of all, remember us *(laughs)* – it's quite easy for us to get forgotten in the mix, so we really need France, the UK and Holland to make a pact not to adversely affect the lives of the people on these islands.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, even halfway around the world, Brexit is raising concern about the free movement of goods, of services, and, of course, people. Susie Alegre is a lawyer specialising in the BOTS and the rights of their citizens.

SUSIE ALEGRE: As a result of Brexit they're going to lose their EU citizenship, you know, if you grow up on a small island, you don't necessarily want to spend your whole life living on your small island, and being a European citizen really opens up the world for you. So the fact that people in Crown dependencies and Overseas Territories are going to lose an important

element of their citizenship without having been asked about it may well give rise to legal challenges.

CHRIS MORRIS: Which is why the Brexit BOTS, like their online counterparts, could suddenly appear in all sorts of unexpected places.

SUSIE ALEGRE: At the moment, there are so many huge complex issues that the British government is trying to manage around Brexit, at this stage those may not be front and centre, it may well be, and particularly with the case of Gibraltar, that in the next year you'll suddenly see quite serious issues popping up out of these dots on the map.

Music: Nick Cave – Rock of Gibraltar.

CHRIS MORRIS: BOTS may be dots, but they can still flourish. Some suggest that in the future Gibraltar could become Europe's Hong Kong, but hang on – we all know what happened to sovereignty there. In the next programme we'll look at other places that worry about being ignored in the Brexit talks, but which are a lot closer to home. Goodbye.

Series 3, Episode 4, 'Brexit's Most Vulnerable', 22 February 2018, 12pm

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the latest series of *Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed* – revealing what's really at stake in the Brexit negotiations. Previously we've covered everything from trade to divorce bills, nuclear power and immigration, how Brexit could affect Scotland and Ireland, all still available online. In this new series, Chris Morris now discovers which parts of Britain could be most affected by Brexit.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hello, in a series of speeches the government says it's mapping out the road to Brexit. The trouble is, I tried that last year. Taxi?!

TAXI DRIVER: Alright mate.

CHRIS MORRIS: Can we go to Brexit please?

TAXI DRIVER: That's gonna cost you.

CHRIS MORRIS: So this time (*bicycle bell rings*) I'm going by bike. But if you want to get to the bottom of what Brexit might really mean for Britain, it's no good just riding round the crowded streets of Westminster, where power resides and where all these key decisions are being made. It sounds like our Brexit jukebox has got the right idea.

Music: Interferon – 'Get out of London'

CHRIS MORRIS: Not least because leaked government assessments that emerged last month suggest that the region is likely to take the biggest economic hit from Brexit are a long way from London.

Music: Ray Charles – 'Hit the Road, Jack'

CHRIS MORRIS: So, I've cycled all the way . . . well, there may have been a train involved, but anyway . . . to the West Midlands.

STEVE BRITTAN: You can see that with these electric trucks we can pick parts using the global logistics company next door, PGS Global Logistics, we can get our parts to any part of the world in next to no time.

CHRIS MORRIS: I'm with Steve Brittan, a senior executive, now advising this company, BSA tools in Birmingham. It's a famous local name, BSA, and the origins of this iconic Midlands brand stretch way back to the mid-17th Century.

STEVE BRITTAN: When six gunsmiths got together in the gun quarter in Birmingham, and decided to lobby the government because it was felt that we made better muskets at the time, and we couldn't trust the Dutch to supply us with muskets, now they . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Disputes with Europe.

STEVE BRITTAN: That's right.

CHRIS MORRIS: Sounds familiar.

STEVE BRITTAN: Nothing changes, does it? They won the day and BSA, Birmingham Small Arms grew into a company that made motorbikes, cars, guns and all sorts of other products.

CHRIS MORRIS: Motorbikes especially, but also, incidentally, bicycles (*sound of bicycle bell*). These days though, and this is crucial for an understanding of the potential impact of Brexit, BSA Tools has branched out from simply making things into supplying services as well.

STEVE BRITTAN: Some cases, you have fixed service just as though you would with your car, these days you don't just sell machinery, a lot of importers buy machines and sell machines, but they can't support the machines. As a manufacturer we can.

CHRIS MORRIS: Because when people talk about Brexit they seem to talk about, 'Well, there's goods, and there's services' . . .

STEVE BRITTAN: Yeah, yeah.

CHRIS MORRIS: The point is a lot of businesses, obviously yours included, are doing both all at once.

STEVE BRITTAN: Absolutely.

CHRIS MORRIS: Or, to put it in cycling terms – it's like riding a tandem. But the current uncertainty caused by Brexit means many companies are beginning to wonder whether the wheels might come off. How well in the future can they trade services as well as goods around the EU, once the UK has left the single market and the customs union? Philip McCann is one of the authors of a report on Brexit risks, published by the City Ready Institute, at the University of Birmingham.

PHILIP MCCANN: What you see is that services and . . . and manufacturing and so on are all extremely integrated in very complicated ways. Those complexities become orders of magnitude more complex when you realise those goods and services are going across borders multiple times, British firms will be providing financial services advice on imports to French companies who are producing components which are then assembled in sub-assembly facilities in Italy, which then go to joint ventures in Germany. They come back to the UK, they're assembled into final products which are then sent back to Denmark for sales. I mean, this is the reality.

CHRIS MORRIS: Because when we talk about services, a lot of the talk is about the financial services the City of London, you're saying these other hidden services, if you like, are far more vulnerable?

PHILIP MCCANN: Far more vulnerable, and actually much, much bigger, the scale of the vulnerabilities dwarfs the financial markets.

CHRIS MORRIS: And that means that areas like the West Midlands, with lots of activity in these so-called manufacturing services, have most to lose if trade with Europe is disrupted.

ANNOUNCER (*Gong sound*) Brexit – Perplexit.

CHRIS MORRIS: Maybe it won't be, but Professor McCann and his team have come to conclusions markedly similar to those unpublished government assessments that many members of Parliament have now seen.

PHILIP MCCANN: What we found is, the implications of Brexit are going to be much more severe for the regions in the Midlands and the North of England, they're the most exposed places. Whereas the places that, ironically, voted Remain, Scotland and in particular London are likely to be less affected than many of these places that voted Leave.

CHRIS MORRIS: And the reason to that obviously are complex, if you wanted to try and sum them up, what in a nutshell, is behind that?

PHILIP MCCANN: The reason is that the regions in the Midlands of England and in the North of England are more dependent on European markets for their economic prosperity. They're neither the London economy or some of the other more prosperous parts of the UK. The more prosperous parts of the economy tend to be more resilient as well, to any kind of shocks.

CHRIS MORRIS: Of course, that doesn't mean somewhere like the West Midlands is giving up – far from it, there's an 'on your bike' mentality, getting on the road and touting for business. The leader of Birmingham City Council was among a group of representatives from regional cities who were in Brussels this week to meet the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier, while another local delegation has recently returned from Leipzig in Eastern Germany.

PAUL FORREST: Already we're starting to talk to German Länder about how we can improve trade and economic ties after Brexit.

CHRIS MORRIS: As you can probably hear, Paul Forrest is originally from the North East of England, another region very exposed to Brexit, but he's now head of research at Midlands Economic Forum.

PAUL FORREST: I think there's an understanding, particularly at a regional level within Germany that there is a highly-integrated value-added supply chain within Europe, we do understand it's crucial, we're working with them already on looking how we promote this going forward, so even though you leave the European Union, the very fact that you're changing your trading relationship with them does throw up new opportunities, it just depends on your negotiating skills. Currently, I think, we have more gold medal winning Olympic cyclists than we do have people trained in trade negotiations.

CHRIS MORRIS: Maybe we should get the cycling team to do the negotiations, it might be more successful!

PAUL FORREST: Well actually, the British cycling team are a really good example of how to look across an economy and look at the advantages you can derive from the economy and draw on, really, skills to shave a hundredth of a second by using this type of pedal, or ten seconds off by this type of equipment. If we could bring that strategy to the rest of British manufacturing, then I think innovation would really take off.

CHRIS MORRIS: Of course, successful cyclists and successful businesses both need good roads with no barriers, and one immediate concern is that however well trade negotiations might go, if supply chains get disrupted by any form of border controls, companies won't be able to move goods as smoothly as they do now. Like many cyclists, economist Rebecca Jones from the Economic Forum is a little worried about lorry drivers.

REBECCA JONES: The most recent data we have suggests that something in the region of 80% of HGV in the UK are coming in from non-UK backgrounds, so obviously if that kind of supply chain of them coming in from Calais, driving, emptying and filling up and going back, all within a couple of days, if you're adding a few hours, let alone days at the sea port after Brexit then, obviously that's going to have a huge impact on productivity and exporting and importing goods in and out of the Midlands.

CHRIS MORRIS: Plenty to think about, especially if there's this nagging fear that your voice (*bicycle bell rings loudly*) isn't the loudest in the room. (*sound of Big Ben*) Paul Forrest thinks the impact of Brexit may not be as bad as some people think, but . . .

PAUL FORREST: The big concern that we get from talking to business is the Midlands will be ignored, and that there will be a trade-off in exchange for . . . other sectors are able to lobby more effectively. National government has negotiated with Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the City of London, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, in terms of looking at what impact Brexit has on them. But there is no formal mechanism, by which the Midlands can articulate a coherent view on how to respond to Brexit.

CHRIS MORRIS: (*sound of bicycle wheels*) Whoah, that is quite a mountain to climb, and it certainly can feel like a bit of an uphill struggle on this Brexit bike, but, oh, here we are: flat ground at last. In fact, I think we've reached a level playing field – something the EU talks about a lot.

MICHEL BARNIER: We need to ensure a level playing field between us.

CHRIS MORRIS: So says Michel Barnier.

MICHEL BARNIER: There will be no ambitious partnership without common ground in fair competition, state aid, tax dumping (*fades out*)

CHRIS MORRIS: The state aid he mentions is what some would see as the answer to the Brexit blues – they're hoping local businesses in the West Midlands can get more support from central government, once we're free from EU restrictions. But that goes to the heart of the debate in the UK, how closely will post-Brexit Britain stick to EU rules and regulations? Here's Kate Bell (*bicycle bell rings*) from the TUC, who thinks the government could be doing more already.

KATE BELL: What's really interesting is that the level of state aid provided around the EU already varies absolutely hugely, so you see Germany gives around 2.5 times the amount in terms of a proportion of GDP than the UK, in terms of state aid, so there's pretty significant differences at the moment in how those state aid rules are interpreted. And I think it's quite interesting, the House of Lords looked at this recently, and they actually said what's holding Britain back in terms of support to some of our key industries, some of our key regions isn't the EU state aid rules, it's how those are being interpreted. There's a lot of scope for change there, whatever the eventual deal with the EU is.

CHRIS MORRIS: Yes, the eventual deal. Above all, everyone is looking to London to provide a bit more clarity, and not forget the world well away from the centre of power.

STEVE BRITTAN: London's a different country as far as I'm concerned, it's so far removed from what we do in the rest of the country.

CHRIS MORRIS: Steve Brittan has spent many years trading with China and other parts of the world, he knows there are opportunities out there, but nothing comes easy.

STEVE BRITTAN: There's a thought that you just go and knock on a door, the other side of the world, and tell them that you're now their supplier, well, it doesn't work like that, it takes a lot of years to build up relationships with companies, particularly in the manufacturing sector, so to have the uncertainty we've got, and the customs union probably not even existing for us, wherever we look, we'd be getting stung, and it's got to be done right, it's a real concern. And this is just one of the issues that industry, or business as a whole, is concerned about, this uncertainty.

CHRIS MORRIS: So on this, and other stages of our *Tour de Brexit*, it does feel like we've found different agendas and priorities in different parts of the country. Philip McCann doesn't sound surprised.

PHILIP MCCANN: The UK is basically three separate economies now in many ways. It's partitioning, decoupling into three different countries in effect. You've got London and the hinterland economy, which would include many parts of the East, the South East of course, some parts of the South West. Let's call it the core of the economy. Then you've got Scotland which has been drifting away slowly, largely institutionally, over the last 20, 25 years, and doing pretty well. And then you've got the rump of the UK, which is all of the Midlands, all of the North, plus Wales and Northern Ireland, and those three parts of the economy are basically separating from each other, they're drifting apart, they have been for the last three decades. I think in general, the level of understanding or recognition of these issues has been . . . well, it's not been there, basically.

CHRIS MORRIS: And if people think there's been a lack of understanding in government, well, that may be one of the reasons why, in places like the West Midlands a majority voted for Brexit in the first place.

Music: Queen – 'Bicycle Race'

CHRIS MORRIS: Why not change gear when you feel like you're stuck in neutral? But as negotiations on leaving the EU intensify, some parts of the country are finding that they have to peddle harder than others, just to stay in the race. Goodbye.

Series 3, Episode 5, 'Status Quo', 23 February 2018, 12pm

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the latest series of *Brexit: A Guide for the Perplexed* – revealing what's really at stake in the Brexit negotiations. Previously we've covered everything from trade to divorce bills, nuclear power and immigration, how Brexit could affect Scotland and Ireland, all are still available online. In this new series, Chris Morris now discovers what'll actually happen on Brexit Day.

CHRIS MORRIS: Hello, I'm sure I don't need to remind you that it's now not much more than a year until the day we're due to leave the EU: the 29 March 2019. *(clock ticking)* But the question is: what exactly is going to happen then? I wonder what our Brexit jukebox has got to say about it.

Music: Status Quo – 'Whatever you Want'

CHRIS MORRIS: Hang on! 'Whatever you want', I'm not sure that's entirely true, because surely it's a matter of negotiation and . . .

ANNOUNCER: Chris, Chris! It's not the song, it's the name of the band.

CHRIS MORRIS: Name of the band. Oh – Status Quo, as in transition.

GUY VERHOFSTADT: The transition period can only be the prolongation of the existing situation of the status quo.

PHILIP HAMMOND: The transition or implementation period, which will effectively replicate the current status quo.

CHRIS MORRIS: You say 'status' *(with short 'a' sound)* I say 'status' *(with long 'a' sound)* and in German?

ANGELA MERKEL (?): Status quo *(German words, unclear)*

CHRIS MORRIS: Well that at least is the current plan straight after Brexit day.

CATHERINE BARNARD: My name's Catherine Barnard, I'm professor of EU law at the University of Cambridge.

CHRIS MORRIS: Now, Catherine, I'm sure you were probably too studious in the 70s and 80s to be a fan of Status Quo . . .

CATHERINE BARNARD: *(laughs)*

CHRIS MORRIS: . . . but can you just talk me through 'status quo transition' – what are we talking about?

CATHERINE BARNARD: Essentially, for most people they will not notice the difference between the situation on the 29 March 2019, and that on the 30 March 2019.

CHRIS MORRIS: Say that again?

CATHERINE BARNARD: They will not notice the difference between *(fades out)*

CHRIS MORRIS: But wasn't this supposed to be, I don't know, Independence Day and Christmas all rolled into one? It's beginning to sound a bit, well, technical.

CATHERINE BARNARD: Because the idea behind the status quo transition is that we stay in the single market, so free movement of goods, free movement of persons, capital and services, and also the agricultural policies, fisheries policies and so forth remain the same.

CHRIS MORRIS: But doesn't the government want to have exceptions to that?

CATHERINE BARNARD: Well, that's what they say, but the EU is not keen, because the EU says the UK needs transition very much and you're basically going to get it on our terms. And not only are you going to get it on our terms, our terms are actually worse than the current position, because where there will be a difference is that the UK government will not be able to participate in the EU institutions, and it's likely we also won't have a judge on the European Court of Justice either. So this is where people say we will be a rule taker and not a rule maker.

Music: Status Quo – 'Break the Rules'

CHRIS MORRIS: Businesses will benefit from the certainty provided by the transition, which is due to last for about two years, but the legal complexities could be horrendous. And if it's basically status quo – and the idea is to avoid sudden shocks – wouldn't it be easier simply to stay in the EU for a little bit longer? Practically, it probably would, but politically? Mujtaba Rahman is Europe Director at the Eurasia Group Consultancy.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: Politically very difficult for Theresa May to walk back. Her commitment for the UK to leave the EU on March 29, 2019 would create, I think, a risk for serious rebellion on the Eurosceptic right, it would inflame large parts of the country that are looking at that date as our formal exit from the EU. I think the transition is the much lesser evil, from their perspective.

CHRIS MORRIS: And yet . . .

JACOB REES-MOGG: . . . would make the United Kingdom, in the transition phase, no more than a vassal state, a colony, a serf of the European Union (*fades out*)

CHRIS MORRIS: It is kind of awkward when one of your big slogans is 'Take Back Control' to find that you've actually, for a short while, lost even more control. But for some Brexiteers, transition is still a price worth paying.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: I think they're focused on Brexit Day, that's a big victory for them, even if we enter a standstill transition, the point is legally we will no longer be a member state . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: We've left.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: We've left. That's the prize they are focused on, that is the outcome they want to achieve.

CHRIS MORRIS: But in the meantime, they will keep up the pressure on the government to negotiate hard on the detail. So, if the EU's opening gambit is 'take it or leave it' – how much wiggle room is there? For example, the EU is insisting that citizens who arrive in the UK during the transition should have the right to settle permanently. Can the UK do anything about that? Aarti Shankar works for the think tank Open Europe.

AARTI SHANKAR: On the movement of citizens, the UK is saying, 'Well, yes, that will stay largely the same, they will be able to come on very similar terms, it's just now they'll have to register when they arrive in the UK.' And the EU is . . . is pushing back against that. We're

still actually, I would say, at the start of the negotiation on the transition period, so yes there are some niggly points, but on the broad structure, I think, we're roughly the same.

CHRIS MORRIS: Except there is a difficulty within that period, which comes when, potentially, new laws emerge from the EU, over which we've had no vote?

AARTI SHANKAR: Yes, the EU has put forward an idea that the UK will not have a decision making role over EU regulations and rules that come out during the transition period, we've already seen the government, to a certain extent, push back against that. I would imagine they're going to argue for something very similar to what Norway has and other single market non-EU members have, the idea that there's a right to be informed on what the EU is planning to introduce, equally a right to reservation so, although it won't have a veto over what the EU is proposing, it has a right to delay implementation in particular areas.

CHRIS MORRIS: Tricky, and it feels like there could be quite a bit of negotiation still to come on the transition, which is supposed to be part of an overall withdrawal agreement. And as regular listeners may have noticed, it's a bit complicated.

ANNOUNCER (*buzzer sound*)_Understatement alert!

CHRIS MORRIS: In fact, there's still no guarantee that withdrawal deal including transition will be done. We tend to avoid talking too much about politics in this series and focus on practicalities. But Mujtaba Rahman says you can't ignore the febrile atmosphere at Westminster.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: There's pressure on the Tory right, there will be pro-European Tories that are seeking to collaborate with the Labour opposition, all of these present risks to the government. It's not inconceivable that there won't be an agreement. In order to prepare for that kind of outcome, there is talk of a 'No deal' deal, so let's put in place a barebones agreement . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: The basics?

MUJTABA RAHMAN: The very basics . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Keep the planes . . .

MUJTABA RAHMAN: (*speaking over*) Keep the planes flying, you know, keep trade running.

CHRIS MORRIS: But high risks for business in all of this?

MUJTABA RAHMAN: Very high risks for business, not simply here in the UK, but also in the European continent as well, which is why I think all sides are mindful to try and achieve an agreement, but ultimately it's about whether Theresa May can manage domestic politics, and those will be very, very tricky.

CHRIS MORRIS: And there will be those who will never be satisfied, because they think we're heading for BINO. For some of you that may bring back memories of the famous comic – but this Brexit in Name Only. Catherine Barnard can talk about both of them.

CATHERINE BARNARD: Brexit in name only, for the period of transition, absolutely but after that we don't know, much depends on the outcome of future negotiations. And this is where the government is really going to have to face up to some difficult choices.

CHRIS MORRIS: Did you ever read *The Beano*? I mean . . .

CATHERINE BARNARD: (*laughs*)

CHRIS MORRIS: I mean, Jacob Rees-Mogg is obviously Lord Snooty, but I'm not quite sure who Dennis The Menace would be?

CATHERINE BARNARD: I was going to say, this wonderful dog . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Gnasher.

CATHERINE BARNARD: Gnasher. And you start to think, well, in which case, which of our European counterparts – who's Dennis the Menace and who's Gnasher.

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, there's certainly been plenty of gnashing of teeth in Germany, and maybe even a little wailing.

DIANA ZIMMERMANN: There was kind of hurt feeling, kind of a hurt love, a German love for the English.

CHRIS MORRIS: Diana Zimmermann is the London correspondent of ZDF Television.

DIANNA ZIMMERMANN: I get a lot of people asking me, 'Do you really think it's going to happen?' And when I then say, 'Yes I do think it's going to happen, don't ask me *how* it's going to happen, and what it will be in the end, but there will be something like a Brexit', and then they say, 'Really, I can't believe it.'

CHRIS MORRIS: When people here, Boris Johnson saying, 'We're going to go out and make our way in the world, this is an act of a confident country,' what do they say?

DIANA ZIMMERMAN: Obviously there is a lot of respect for the British, and there is a lot of the sense that probably some things will work better afterwards, but all in all I think, there are very few people who really think this is a good way to follow.

CHRIS MORRIS: And if the UK doesn't want negotiations to drag on and on, well Mujtaba Rahman points out that the EU feels just the same.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: They also want to move on, they don't want to focus on Brexit, it's a distraction, it's a backward-looking issue, it's not where Europe's priorities are. They want political direction.

CHRIS MORRIS: Life without the UK.

MUJTABA RAHMAN: They want to think about the future, they want to think about what life in the EU means of the next five, 10, 15 years, what are the reforms necessary to re-energise Europe, to make it healthy again, and backward-looking, very difficult negotiation with the UK is not, I think, where their priorities are.

CHRIS MORRIS: How difficult? Well, at the moment, the two sides can't even agree on basic language.

DIANA ZIMMERMAN: As the Germans said last week only, they still don't have any clue what the British really want from the whole thing. Is it transition or implementation?

UNNAMED SPEAKER (*MICHEL BARNIER?*) The transition.

THERESA MAY (?) Implementation.

UNNAMED SPEAKER: The transition period.

DAVID DAVIS: Now, the implementation period . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Stop it. The government insists on calling status quo transition an 'implementation period' because, well, it sounds a bit more dynamic. But Aarti Shanker says there may not be that much new stuff to implement, by the time we leave.

AARTI SHANKAR: Both the EU and the UK have quite limited expectations of what will be included in terms of the future relationship, the . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: Although David Davis said he wants to finish it all before we leave, I mean, maybe he's just doing that for effect, for negotiating effect, but . . .

AARTI SHANKAR: Oh yeah . . .

CHRIS MORRIS: . . . pretty much everyone knows it's not going to happen.

AARTI SHANKAR: I think that's true, I think the government is tying itself a little bit in knots, when it restates again and again that we are looking to have the agreement finalised. The EU has said very clearly that what we're looking at is a political declaration of what the future relationship will be, and negotiations on that future long-term relationship will take place during a transition.

CHRIS MORRIS: So, there's an awful lot to fit into the next year, but then an awful lot more to fit into the two years after that as well. Catherine Barnard is worried that even after a transition, time could still run out. (*ticking sounds, followed by alarm*)

CATHERINE BARNARD: There is an interesting question: what happens if the UK isn't ready? Will it be possible to rollover transition for a bit longer, while the IT systems are set up to ensure that we can properly monitor migration, or the ports are reformed so that proper border controls can be introduced. All of this will take time, and at the moment time's not on our side.

CHRIS MORRIS: Because that takes us back, doesn't it, to the idea we've talked about before, of a cliff edge – instead of having a cliff edge in March 2019, potentially you could have one . . . less than two years later, if all those things you've described aren't ready?

CATHERINE BARNARD: Absolutely. It's a bit like walking the plank, the plank has gone from being a short to a three-foot plank, to a six foot plank at the end of that plank, what's going to happen if we're not ready?

CHRIS MORRIS: Well, supporters of Brexit want to turn that plank into a springboard. (*bouncing sound*) And they want to know the landing zone – what exactly is transition supposed to be leading to? The trouble is, the whole process has become so fraught and predictions so precarious, that there is a sense that almost anything could happen. Will we be going . . .

Music: Status Quo – 'Down, Down',

CHRIS MORRIS: Or will we be . . .

Music: Status Quo – 'Rockin' all over the World.'

CHRIS MORRIS: The thing about status quo is that you don't really need to know much more than three chords to really nail it. But Brexit, well, it's turning out to be a polyphonic symphony of mind-boggling complexity. This series had tried to make sense of some of it, but if you're still perplexed you're probably not alone. In little more than a year though, the UK is planning on going solo.