



# THE BBC AND BREXIT

THE BBC'S COVERAGE OF BREXIT AND  
THE EU, JULY 2020

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This is the first in-depth summary of EU-related coverage by News-watch since the UK's departure from the EU in January 2020. The survey was conducted between July 6 and July 13 as the first pandemic lockdown restrictions began to be eased.

Ten flagship BBC news programmes were monitored across BBC1, BBC2, Radio 4 and CBBC, and 61 items linked to the EU or Brexit were identified and analysed. These stories added up to 37,000 words of transcript and 2 hours 41 minutes of airtime (5.9 per cent of all news content). The period included two important Brexit stories: an announcement by the government of the UK's first independent immigration policy for many decades; and the likely impact of new, post-Brexit border arrangements. Together, these accounted for more than half of EU/Brexit related airtime.

The main findings are that BBC news output continues to favour unduly pro-EU and anti-Brexit opinion; to seriously under-report pro-Brexit and anti-EU perspectives; and that Corporation correspondents and presenters are still engaged in some respects in a continuation of Project Fear.

The conclusions are reached through a detailed process of analysis which strictly follows the principles of social science and media research and which considers bias through a range of variables, including speaker numbers, wordcount, the breadth of opinion expressed, and the exact nature of each individual programme contribution from both external programme guests and BBC correspondents and presenters.

It is no longer possible, of course, to classify programme contributors as simply Remainers or Leavers, and new broad categories of pro-EU/anti-Brexit and anti-EU/pro-Brexit have been created to reflect this shift.

The survey establishes that those who are enthusiastic about prospects for post-Brexit Britain were outweighed in speaker content and numbers of contributors by approximately 2:1. This is broadly the same ratio which applied between Eurosceptics and Remainers in News-watch surveys over 20 years.<sup>1</sup>

There were 73 outside contributors. Of these 38 (52%) were broadly pro-EU/anti-Brexit, 21 (29%) were broadly anti-EU/pro-Brexit and 14 (19%) were neutral.

The BBC Editorial Guidelines state that an essential component of impartial coverage is the incorporation of 'breadth of opinion'. In this survey, those who were pro-EU/anti Brexit came from a wide variety of organisations and standpoints. Only half were politicians. In sharp contrast, 19 of the 21 of those who were pro-Brexit or anti-EU were Conservative MPs.

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed in the research and reports section of the News-watch website <https://news-watch.co.uk/monitoring-projects-and-reports/> and especially The Brussels Broadcasting Corporation?, a News-watch paper published by the think-tank Civitas <https://news-watch.co.uk/paper-for-civitas-the-brussels-broadcasting-corporation-january-2018/>

Lord Wilson of Dinton, in his 2005 report<sup>2</sup>, warned that the BBC's coverage of the EU is 'seen too much through the Westminster prism' in the limited range of opinions it sought in the European debate. This report thus shows that, 15 years on, in the final moves towards separation from the EU, the same problem persists in BBC consideration of the Brexit case.

Opinions expressed by the pro-EU/anti-Brexit guests included that the social care system would suffer badly as a result of the government's new immigration system; Brexit uncertainty would continue to hinder the economy as a whole; that the re-election of the Polish president was a disaster for the maintenance of EU-enforced rights; that the UK borders would become chaotic; that the refusal of the UK to participate in the EU's coronavirus vaccine buying scheme would impact negatively prices and availability; and that the UK had far less power in diplomatic circles than the EU.

The bias against Brexit caused by an imbalanced selection of contributors was heavily compounded by editorial decisions and opinions expressed by presenters and correspondents. They still spoke of a departure 'cliff-edge', and highlighted a plethora of post-Brexit problems such as a massive increase in customs bureaucracy without exploring potential benefits.

Analysis also showed a heavy weighting towards the pro-EU/anti-Brexit perspective in individual programmes. On the Today programme there were seven pro-EU speakers against two pro-Brexit. Other examples were the World at One (5-1) and BBC1 News at One (4-1). Only one programme of those surveyed had equal numbers of contributors in the pro-Brexit/anti-Brexit categories. This breached editorial guidelines which require each programme to achieve balance over time (although not, of course in each individual programme edition).

The analysis also revealed that on the Today programme those offering positive opinions on the EU or negative opinions on Brexit were given eight times the space of those offering views to the contrary. On The World at One, the differential was eighteen times. This was glaring bias, illustrating that issues with the balance of external sources that News-watch has identified consistently since 1999 have continued unabated despite the Leave vote in the 2016 referendum.

Tim Davie, the new BBC director general, pledged in his first address to staff on September 3, 2020 that a commitment to impartiality would be his number one priority<sup>3</sup>. The evidence of this survey is that he has a major battle on his hands to restore it. News-watch is demanding an early meeting with Mr Davie to discuss the way forward, which must include systematic, independent monitoring of output to establish the scale of the problem.

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<sup>2</sup> 'BBC News Coverage of the European Union', independent panel report:

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our\\_work/govs/independentpanelreport.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/govs/independentpanelreport.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> BBC DG Tim Davie's introductory speech to staff in full: <https://www.televisual.com/news/bbc-dg-tim-davies-introductory-speech-to-staff-in-full/>

# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	2
CONTENTS.....	4

## PART ONE: ANALYSIS .....6

OVERVIEW.....	6
COVERAGE.....	9
Post Brexit Immigration.....	9
Post-Brexit Borders and Customs Arrangements.....	10
Launch of government 'New Start- Let's Get Going' Brexit awareness campaign.....	11
Britain imposing first post-Brexit 'blacklist' sanctions.....	11
Member States and the EU (Polish presidential election).....	12
Commons Intelligence Committee/Russian influence report.....	12
EU, Brexit and Covid-19.....	12

## PART TWO: MONITORING STATISTICS.....13

SECTION ONE: PROGRAMME ANALYSIS.....	13
1.1 OVERVIEW.....	13
1.2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND.....	13
1.3 EU/BREXIT COVERAGE ON THE TEN SURVEYED PROGRAMMES.....	14
1.3 COVERAGE BY DAY.....	15
1.4 EU AND THE WIDER NEWS AGENDA.....	16
1.5 EXTERNAL SOURCES.....	17
1.6 WORD-COUNTS PER PROGRAMME.....	18
1.7 UK POLITICAL SOURCES.....	20
1.8 BREADTH OF OPINION.....	21
1.9 EU THEMES.....	24
SECTION 2: INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMME DATA.....	26
2.1 RADIO 4, TODAY.....	26
2.2 CBBC, NEWSROUND.....	29
2.3 RADIO 4, THE WORLD AT ONE.....	30
2.4 BBC1, NEWS AT ONE.....	32
2.5 RADIO 4, PM.....	33
2.6 RADIO 4, SIX O'CLOCK NEWS.....	35
2.7 BBC1, NEWS AT SIX.....	36
2.8 RADIO 4, THE WORLD TONIGHT.....	38
2.9 BBC1, NEWS AT TEN.....	39
2.10 BBC2, NEWSNIGHT.....	40
2.11 Conclusion:.....	41
SECTION 3: THEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF EU COVERAGE.....	43
3.1. Britain's First Post-Brexit Sanctions.....	43
3.2. EU Foreign Policy.....	44

3.3. General Brexit Comment .....	45
3.4. Post-Brexit Business and Trade.....	46
3.5. Post-Brexit Borders.....	47
3.6. Post-Brexit Immigration .....	48
3.7. Brexit and Scotland .....	49
3.8. Intelligence Committee and Russia Report into interference in UK politics, including the 2016 referendum.....	49
3.9. EU, Brexit and Covid-19.....	51
3.10. Member States and the EU .....	52
3.11. Government's Brexit Information Campaign.....	52
3.1 Conclusion.....	53

## **PART THREE: DETAILED TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS .....54**

Britain's first post-Brexit sanctions .....	54
EU Foreign Policy .....	56
General Brexit Comment.....	56
Post-Brexit business and trade.....	57
Post-Brexit Borders/ The Government Launch of its 'UK's New Start – Let's Get Going' Information Campaign .....	57
Post-Brexit Immigration.....	62
Brexit and Scotland .....	67
Commons Intelligence Committee .....	69
EU-wide Vaccination Scheme .....	71
Polish Presidential Election.....	72

## **PART FOUR: RUNNING LOG .....74**

July 6 .....	74
July 7 .....	77
July 8 .....	78
July 9 .....	79
July 10.....	82
July 11 .....	84
July 12.....	84
July 13.....	86

# PART ONE: ANALYSIS

## OVERVIEW

The analysis which follows is a summary of some of the main points of concern to emerge from the monitoring of eight-days of Brexit/EU-related content from 45 hours of news coverage on a selection of 10 of the main BBC news programmes broadcast between July 6 and July 13, 2020. The parameters of the survey, together with statistical analysis are described fully in Part Two. Part Three is the detailed overall impartiality transcript analysis.

The main findings are that BBC news output continues to favour unduly pro-EU and anti-Brexit opinion; to under-report pro-Brexit and anti-EU perspectives; and that BBC correspondents and presenters are still engaged in some respects in a continuation of Project Fear. The BBC is thus not fulfilling its Charter requirement to be impartial in this crucial area of national importance.

The programmes monitored were:

### **Radio 4:**

Today - daily between 6am and 9am and 7am-9am on Saturday 11 July

World at One – 1pm-1.45pm Monday-Friday (and on Sunday 12 July, its sister programme The World This Weekend)

PM - from 5pm-6pm daily and 5pm to 5.30pm on Saturday 11 July

The Six O’Clock News - 6pm-6.30pm daily and 6pm-6.15pm on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 July

The World Tonight - 10pm - 10.45pm weekdays

### **BBC1**

The News at One – daily, (including lunchtime editions of BBC Weekend News)

The News at Six (including early evening editions of BBC Weekend News)

The News at Ten (including late evening editions of BBC Weekend News)

### **BBC2**

Newsnight – 10.45pm Monday-Friday

### **CBBC**

Newsround – daily at 9.15am, 12.10am and 4pm

The selected output includes the Corporation's self-declared flagship news programmes and it could thus be reasonably expected to be representative of the Corporation's news output as a whole. The period of analysis was selected to coincide with the initial lifting of pandemic lockdown restrictions and as Brexit negotiations with the EU gathered pace once more at a time when there was more space for coverage in the overall news agenda.

There was no knowing at the outset how much Brexit/EU-related coverage there would be, but it turned out to be the second biggest topic category of output, adding up to 5.9 per cent and covering major Brexit-related themes such as the announcement of the new post-EU immigration system; There were 11 categories of subject matter in which EU/Brexit mentions were made. Of these, eight focused directly on post-Brexit issues. They were, in order of the volume of airtime:

**Post-Brexit immigration** (28.5%)  
**Post-Brexit borders (and customs arrangements)** (22.8%)  
**Post-Brexit self-generated UK blacklist of human rights abusers** (14.4%)  
**Launch of post-Brexit government information campaign** (9.1%)  
**EU Covid-19 scheme (which the UK decided to reject)** (4.8%)  
**Post-Brexit business and trade** (3.9%)  
**General (incidental) Brexit comments** (1.4%)  
**Brexit and Scotland** (0.5%)

As can be seen, the bulk of the relevant airtime was thus in the first two categories and it is here where the failures to attain impartiality were most striking in a combination of the guest selection and correspondent or presenter comments.

Other topics where there were mentions of the EU were:

**Member-states and the EU (about the Polish presidential election)** (7.4% of airtime)  
**House of Commons Intelligence Committee composition and Russia report** (7.1%)  
**EU Foreign Policy** (0.2%)

Overall, there were 61 separate feature items, running to 162 minutes and 37,000 words of transcription. There were 73 guest contributors. There follows is a summary of the key points.

Speakers on EU issues can no longer be regarded simply as Remainers or Leavers, and so, as is explained fully and detailed in Part Two, new broad classifications of **pro-EU/anti-Brexit** and **anti-EU/pro-Brexit** have been adopted. **The survey shows that those in the former group outweighed those in the latter by approximately 2:1.** This is broadly the same hugely unbalanced ratio which applied between Eurosceptics and Remainers in News-watch surveys over 20 years. The precise figures are that of the 73

outside contributors, **38** (52 per cent) were broadly pro-EU/ anti-Brexit, **21** were broadly anti-EU/pro-Brexit (29 per cent of the head count) and 14 (19 per cent) were neutral.

Such a striking imbalance is clear evidence that BBC coverage is thus still not reflecting that the verdict of the 2016 EU referendum was in favour of Brexit and that the 2019 General Election endorsed the Conservative government's manifesto promise to proceed with the process of departure as quickly as possible. Instead, the editorial impetus was to explore to maximum extent the problems of Brexit and the limitations and difficulties of life outside the EU.

Part Three also establishes that the serious numerical imbalance noted above – which, in effect, set the framework for the coverage – was bolstered by a high level of negative comment about post-Brexit prospects by BBC correspondents and presenters; through an editorial mindset which assumed that the EU and its related policies were benevolent and good for the UK and other member countries; and through 'bias by omission', in this case, an almost complete lack of exploration of the potential benefits of Brexit.

Another manifestation of the pro-EU/anti-Brexit bias was in the **word counts** of contributions, which show overall that those in the above category delivered **8,875 words, compared to 3,712** from those who were anti-EU/pro-Brexit. These figures (a ratio of **7:3**) are not taken in themselves as proof of bias but they are further clear evidence of a seriously unbalanced approach; those in the former category were afforded more time to advance their views.

The BBC insists (as is explored in full detail in Part Two at 1.8) that the inclusion of 'breadth of opinion' is one of the most important elements in achieving balance in coverage. The evidence in Part Two also establishes that in terms of pro-Brexit/anti-EU opinion, all but two (Richard Tice, chairman of the Brexit Party, and the Polish justice minister) of the 21 such contributors (90 per cent) were Conservative MPs. In sharp contrast, anti/Brexit/pro-EU speakers came from 13 distinct other categories, including business, journalism, academia, the care sector and the civil service. Politicians from Labour, the Conservative party, the crossbenches and the Liberal Democrats made up only 38 per cent of the total.

This was a major failure in the editorial process. It seems that the BBC still regards the anti-EU perspective as a single party obsession and makes no effort to incorporate in its output the diverse views which are opposed to both the EU and the Brexit process.

As would be expected, pandemic coverage remained dominant during the eight days of monitoring and commanded 57.5 percent (1,587 minutes) of the total available airtime. As already noted, Brexit/EU items were the second commonest with 5.9 per cent, followed by China-related coverage (5.6 per cent), and Black Lives Matter/BAME issues (5.4 per cent). No other individual topic ran to five per cent. The full table of news subject matter is in Part Two at 1.4.



## COVERAGE

In terms of the Brexit/EU subject matter, the main topics, listed in order of volume of coverage, and covering the main points of bias, were:

### **Post Brexit Immigration**

This amounted to 46 minutes, which was 28.5 per cent of the Brexit/EU airtime and included 23 separate contributions from programme guests of whom 14 were pro-EU/Brexit, and seven were anti EU/pro-Brexit.

The focus was the announcement by Home Secretary Priti Patel of the government's new immigration system which would partially replace the EU's Free Movement regulations. It was reported that the new scheme embraced incomers from all countries and allowed entry to those who had the requisite skills and income-earning capacity, but prevented lowly-paid workers earning less than c.£25,000 a year entering the UK. It was said the government was dealing with the restrictions on low-paid entrants by developing training for UK residents.

Much of the coverage concentrated on the likely impact of the new measures on the narrow topic of health and social care provision, emphasising in particular through biased guest contributions and BBC correspondent comment, that stopping low-paid entrants to the UK would hit the social care sector especially hard and probably mean that 122,000 vacancies would remain unfilled.

Only two interviews (on PM and World Tonight), featuring Richard Tice, the Brexit Party chairman and former health minister Phillip Dunne, looked at the possible across-the board positive impact of the new immigration system. Both maintained that it would be possible and beneficial to train UK staff to fill care sector vacancies.

However, an indication of the scale of the bias against the new scheme was that 2,416 words were spoken by contributors opposed to the measures against 1,469 who were opposed to them, many of whom wanted unregulated access to the UK of low-paid EU citizens to continue and strongly attacked the government for stopping the supply of low-paid labour from abroad. They dismissed as impractical the aim of training UK labour to fill the vacancies. These comments were buttressed by BBC correspondents. Michael Buchanan, for example, opined that the ban on care companies seeking employees would 'feel like neglect'.

There was also glaring bias by omission. These measures were an effort to shift from an immigration system dictated and controlled by the EU to a British scheme designed to meet skilled UK labour requirements by allowing access on a calibrated basis to all those suitably qualified irrespective of their

country of origin. The evolution was triggered within a national debate about levels of immigration. In this coverage, the BBC largely ignored – with the exception of the interview with Richard Tice – this debate, and focused very narrowly instead on the perceived negative impact of the new measures on social care provision. This was a blinkered, biased approach.

### **Post-Brexit Borders and Customs Arrangements**

Coverage of this topic was 22.8 percent of the EU related total, adding up to almost 37 minutes. The editorial approach was seriously biased towards the pro-EU/anti-Brexit perspective and began on Newsnight (8 July), pegged on an allegedly ‘leaked letter from international trade secretary Liz Truss to her cabinet superiors about alleged problems with post-Brexit border arrangements, including insufficient planning, unresolved tariff issues in Northern Ireland, and the danger of intervention by the WTO. Coverage of the topic resumed on 12-13 July with the announcement of £1.5 billion government investment to deal with post-Brexit border logistics.

There were 10 pro-EU/anti-Brexit speaker contributions, and seven who were anti-EU/pro-Brexit in this category. But this does not reflect the extent of the bias because only one speaker, the Conservative MP Peter Bone, put the pro-Brexit case at length. The other six comprised four identical 78-word descriptions of new border controls from Michael Gove, a parliamentary question about new measures from the MP Steve Baker (66 words) and a response from Boris Johnson (37 words). Against that were six speakers drawn from a variety of backgrounds who predicted serious problems in more detail.

The imbalance is illustrated more clearly by that 2,451 words were spoken by those worried about post-Brexit arrangements, compared to 894 from the opposite point of view, a discrepancy in the ratio of 5:2). This was heavily augmented by comment from a range of BBC correspondents such as political editor Laura Kuenssberg, who between them predicted issues such as a post-Brexit cliff edge, a massive rise in border-related paperwork to 400 million forms, and increased ‘strenuous’ problems entering EU countries through control on pets, new health insurance requirements and the re-introduction of telephone roaming charges.

Ranged against the Conservative MP Peter Bone, a member of the Commons Brexit select committee, were Hilary Benn, chair of the same Commons committee, who alleged government planning was seriously inadequate, and was afforded almost double the time of Mr Bone; a representative of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, who predicted local border arrangements would cause bankruptcies; a former member of the joint customs consultative committee, who was deeply pessimistic; a spokesperson for the British Veterinary Association who confirmed it would be much more difficult to take pets to EU countries; the Irish prime minister, who warned that negotiations must be handled better; and the Conservative MP Damian Green, a strongly pro-Remain figure, who warned that problems with lorries in Kent could lead to chaos.

## **Launch of government ‘New Start- Let’s Get Going’ Brexit awareness campaign**

Material under this heading ran to 14 minutes 45 seconds. Bulletins contained a montage of short audio clip comments from the campaign which were positive about Brexit, running to 71 words. There was a short clip from Damian Green reacting to the campaign, in which he was dubious about new customs arrangements planned by the government (on the ground that they were ‘untested’) and said he was ‘hopeful’ that ‘chaos’ would be avoided. There also outside contributions from two figures who were interviewed in the same feature on Today: Kate Lester from the distribution/haulage company Diamond Logistics, who was deeply pessimistic about trading prospects post-Brexit, and warned that not enough preparation had been made; and James Greenham, of the sports goods company EMS Physio, who was already an established exporter of goods to countries outside the EU. He maintained that he was expecting little to change post-Brexit and was thus neutral. His choice as an interviewee confirms the underlying bias in the editorial process – a business contributor could surely have been found who could have challenged Ms Lester’s negativity and was more upbeat in his expectations about post-Brexit trading opportunities.

## **Britain imposing first post-Brexit ‘blacklist’ sanctions**

This coverage, totalling 23 minutes (almost 14.5 per cent of EU-related airtime) focused on the introduction by the government of new domestic legislation which created a ‘blacklist’ of overseas figures who would in future face sanctions and being stopped from entering the UK. The main item of debate was an interview sequence on The World Tonight in which Tom Tugendhat, chair of the Commons foreign affairs select committee, claimed the new measures would be effective despite Britain being outside the EU and maybe because it was, and were a welcome post-Brexit development. Against him was Nathalie Tocci, of the strongly pro-EU Institute of International Affairs in Rome, who claimed that without EU involvement, the initiative would be useless, and that Britain did not have the power to act unilaterally in this way. Ms Tocci spoke more words (661 - 546) than Mr Tugendhat. But the main areas of bias were in associated comment from BBC presenters and correspondents. Diplomatic correspondent James Landale opined, for example, that sanctions were almost always more powerful if imposed collectively, and James Robbins described the UK as a ‘post imperial power’, suggesting it was relatively weak on the world stage, compared, for example, with China. He also raised questions about whether such a list would harm British export trade.

All these matters were legitimate areas of comment and exploration, but the key overall point in terms of impartiality was that yet again, the BBC chose to raise more negative question marks about post-Brexit realities than positive ones.

### **Member States and the EU (Polish presidential election)**

This category, adding up to 12 minutes (7.4 per cent of EU airtime), was coverage of the Polish presidential elections. The poll took place on Sunday July 12, with the results coming in the following morning. There were interviews on World at One and the World Tonight on July 13, which basic analysis figures showed were heavily biased (2:1 in terms of contributors and 793-199 in the word count) towards those who thought the re-election of Andrzej Duda was a threat to EU standards and human rights. In editorial terms, the key issues of the election were cast as whether the EU approved of the results, and whether the outcome would challenge EU standards in terms of such issues as gay rights, the administration of justice and political plurality.

The bias in coverage was that one of the few member countries challenging the EU was projected as sinking into human rights abuses because it was not following EU requirements. The EU was thus seen by the BBC to be a force for good. Those who disagreed with were on a path towards tyranny.

### **Commons Intelligence Committee/Russian influence report**

This was 11 minutes 30 seconds (7.1 per cent) of EU-related airtime and was framed to emphasise again a Remain theme - that Russian influence had been a significant factor in the EU referendum result. The peg was that the government was due to release the Intelligence Committee report on Russia's involvement in UK affairs and was also being pushed belatedly into allowing the election of a new Intelligence Committee chairman. The three programme guests who spoke on the theme were all firm Remainers and spoke almost 1,500 words in advancing their various theories of wrongdoing. No contributors put alternative views.

### **EU, Brexit and Covid-19**

Coverage of this topic (4.8 per cent of the EU-related airtime) – which hinged on why the UK would not be joining an EU-wide scheme to develop and administer an EU vaccine against Covid-19 – was weighted heavily towards suggesting that the EU scheme would be more effective and fairer than the alternative being adopted by the government, a solo UK effort.

The remaining four categories – post-Brexit Business and Trade, General Brexit Comment, Brexit and Scotland and EU Foreign Policy – totalled less than a combined 10 minutes and are detailed in Part Three. The first three were strikingly pro-EU/anti-Brexit, and especially the analysis of Alan Little in his assessment of the reasons why Brexit was triggering a rise in pro-independence support in Scotland.

# PART TWO: MONITORING STATISTICS

## SECTION ONE: PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

News-watch monitored ten BBC news and current affairs programmes for eight days, from Monday 6 July 2020 to the launch of the government's 'The UK's New Start: Let's Get Going' campaign on Monday 13 July.

The BBC Radio 4 broadcasts in the survey were: Today; The World at One (including The World This Weekend on Sunday); PM; The Six O'Clock News; and The World Tonight. The television programmes comprised the main BBC1 bulletins (News at One, News at Six and News at Ten and the Weekend News); BBC 2's Newsnight; and three daily editions of Newsround on the CBBC channel. The monitored programmes had a combined running time of 58 hours and 11 minutes over the eight-day interval.

Across the ten programmes there were 61 individual items focused on Brexit or EU-related news. These were fully transcribed, generating texts with a combined length of approximately 37,000 words. The transcripts were analysed on a line-by-line basis, and statistical information was compiled into a bespoke database to facilitate detailed analysis and comparison with previous News-watch surveys dating back to 1999.

The News-watch approach is based on a framework outlined by Loughborough University's Department of Social Sciences<sup>4</sup>, first published in 1999, and similar content analysis methodologies have been used regularly by academics to investigate coverage of particular news themes and significant political events in the period since, including as part of the 'Impartiality Reviews' commissioned by the BBC Governors, the BBC Trust, and Ofcom. The approach deploys a range of robust analytical tools and involves both quantitative and qualitative components. This allows for weaknesses in individual broadcast reports to be examined in detail, and also for longitudinal trends and imbalances in coverage to be identified.

### 1.2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In December 2019, the Conservatives under Boris Johnson scored a decisive victory in a general election, campaigning on a pledge to 'Get Brexit Done.' On January 31 the UK formally left the EU and ceased

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<sup>4</sup> Deacon et al, *Researching Communications*, London, Arnold, 1999,

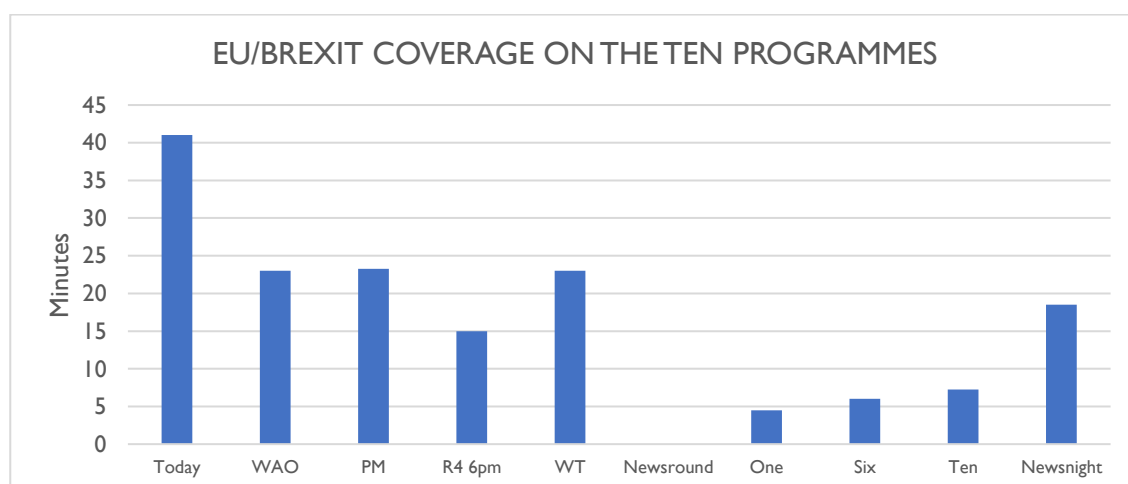
to be part of the bloc's institutions, moving into a year-long transition phase, with negotiations on trade and the future relationship continuing between the UK and EU-27 ahead of the UK's full departure.

Following a first round of talks in March 2020, negotiations were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many EU countries enforced travel restrictions and various forms of societal lockdown in an attempt to curtail the spread of the virus and key figures, including Boris Johnson and the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier, were taken ill. Three further rounds of talks were conducted by video link, a step seen as necessary but unsatisfactory given the detail involved and the number of negotiators on each side. At each stage, both sides expressed their frustrations at the lack of progress.<sup>5</sup>

The Withdrawal Agreement, agreed between the UK and EU in October 2019, made provision for an extension to the transition period of up to two years. However, the deadline for such a request passed on 1 July 2020 and therefore the UK is scheduled to leave the Single Market and Customs Union on 1 January 2021, whether or not an agreement on trade and the future relationship is reached.

### 1.3 EU/BREXIT COVERAGE ON THE TEN SURVEYED PROGRAMMES

The chart and table show the volume of EU/Brexit coverage carried by each of the ten programmes during the eight day survey. Radio 4's Today programme carried the largest volume of EU-related material, to be expected given that it has a significantly longer duration than the other programmes surveyed.

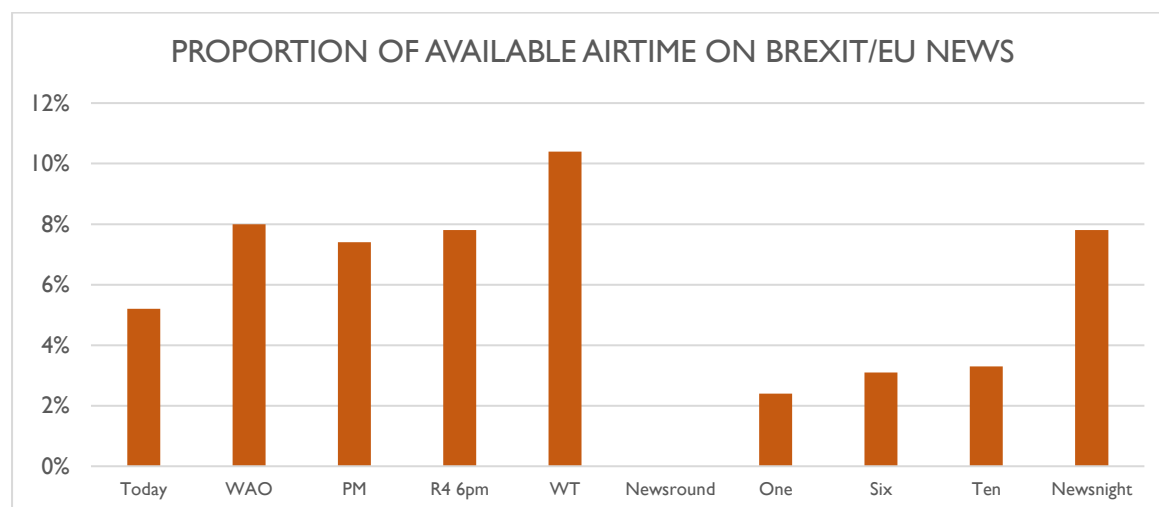


Programme	Today	WAO	PM	R4 6pm	WT	Newsround	One	Six	Ten	Newsnight	Total
EU Coverage (Minutes)	41	23	23.25	15	23	0	4.5	6	7.25	18.5	2 h 41 min

In assessing multiple programmes that vary in duration and structure, it is useful to consider the *proportion* of airtime devoted to EU/Brexit matters. This provides an indication of the relative weight given by the

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/11/brexit-draft-deal-first-of-many-hurdles-to-a-smooth-exit>

producers and editors of each programme to news and debate on these themes. The chart calculates EU/Brexit coverage as a proportion of the available airtime on each of the ten programmes:



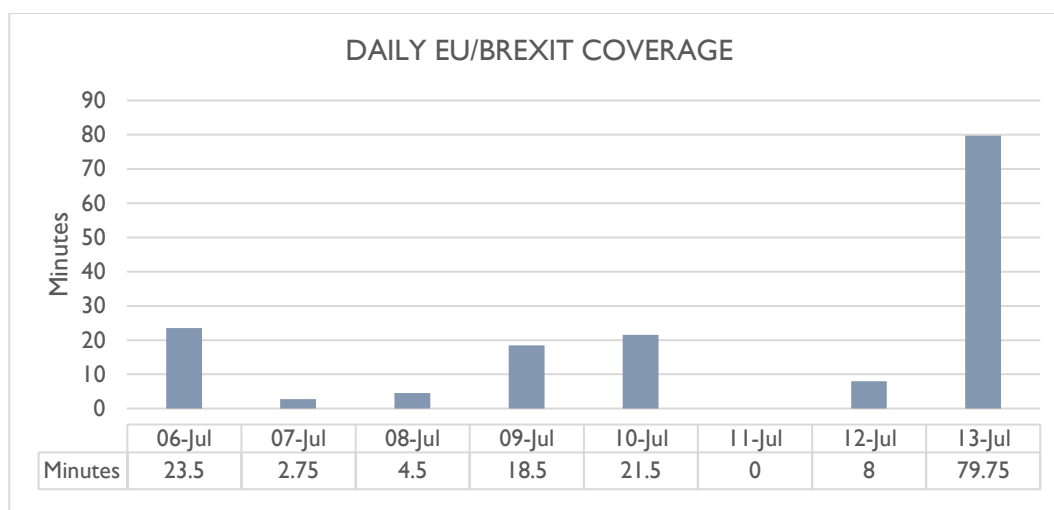
Programme	Today	WAO	PM	R4 6pm	WT	Newsround	One	Six	Ten	Newsnight	Totals
Total Airtime All Subjects (mins)	785.25	287.5	316	193.25	220.75	115	186.75	196.5	220.25	236.75	2758
Total EU Airtime (mins)	41	23	23.25	15	23	0	4.5	6	7.25	18.5	161.5
Percentage	5.2%	8%	7.4%	7.8%	10.4%	0%	2.4%	3.1%	3.3%	7.8%	5.9%

Radio 4's The World Tonight carried the highest proportion of EU/Brexit coverage, with 10.4% of its available space devoted to these themes. In contrast, CBBC's Newsround carried no mention of Brexit or wider EU matters at all during the eight-day survey interval. The three main BBC TV bulletins also devoted relatively little space to EU/Brexit coverage.

On average, EU/Brexit themes accounted for 5.9% of the available airtime on the ten monitored programmes.

### 1.3 COVERAGE BY DAY

There was significant variation in the amount of EU/Brexit coverage broadcast on each day of the survey interval. On Saturday 11 July there was no reference at all to EU or Brexit topics in any of the ten monitored programmes, and on Tuesday 7 and Wednesday 8 July, there was only minimal coverage. In contrast, on July 13, the final day of monitoring, there was a sharp rise in relevant content, amounting to 1 hour and 20 minutes - 49% of the total EU/Brexit-related airtime. The focus was the launch of the government's 'The UK's New Start: Let's Get Going' Brexit information campaign, together with significant policy announcements on borders and immigration.



## 1.4 EU AND THE WIDER NEWS AGENDA

The survey was undertaken as the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions were beginning to be eased across the UK. The impact of the pandemic dominated the news agenda across all ten programmes and it accounted for an average of 57.5% of the total available airtime. However, there was some variation between programmes: BBC1's News at One devoted the most space to discussion of Covid-19 (65.9%) and Radio 4's News at Six the least (45.7%). Thirteen separate topics attracted more than 20 minutes of airtime and are listed below.

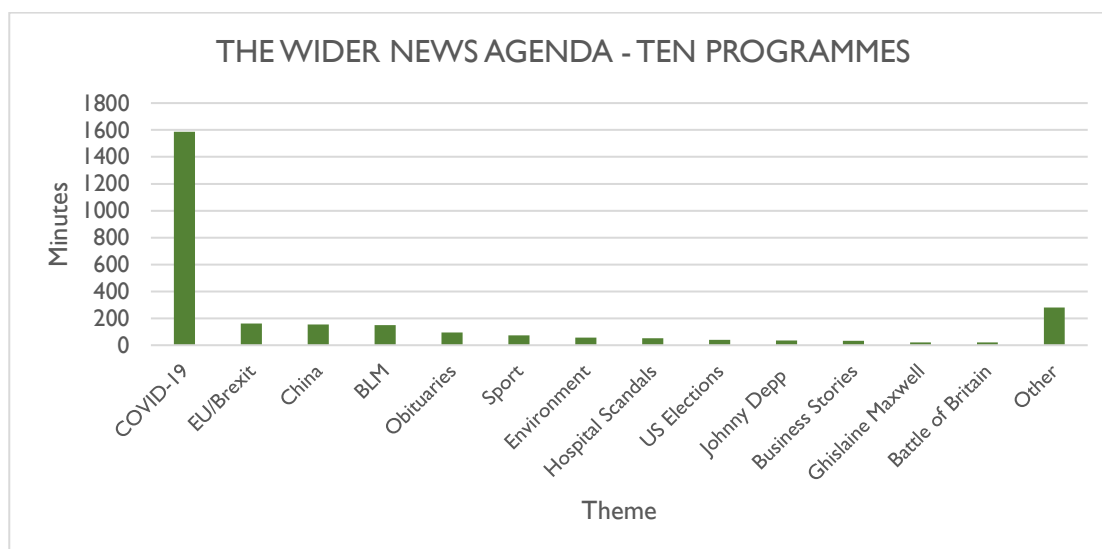
Theme	Airtime (Minutes)	Percentage
Covid-19	1586.75	57.5%
EU/Brexit	161.5	5.9%
China (Including US relations, Huawei)	155.25	5.6%
Black Lives Matter Campaign	149	5.4%
Obituaries	95.25	3.5%
Sport <sup>6</sup>	72.5	2.6%
Environment	57.25	2.1%
Hospital Scandals/Inquiries	50.75	1.8%
US Elections	38.75	1.4%
Johnny Depp Libel Trail	35.75	1.3%
Business Stories	33.25	1.2%
Ghislaine Maxwell/Jeffrey Epstein	21.5	0.8%
Battle of Britain Anniversary/Spitfire Design	21	0.8%
Other	279.5	10.1%
Total	2758	100%

As the graph shows, Covid-19 dominated the BBC news agenda and EU/Brexit was the second most prevalent theme, though it received only a tenth of the coverage of pandemic-related stories. A total of

<sup>6</sup> Dedicated sports slots within programmes are generally excluded for the purpose of News-watch's airtime calculations (for example, regular sports sequences on the Today programme, broadcast each morning at half-past the hour, or the sports reports that are usually included towards the end of the BBC1 bulletins). This ensures that airtime calculations are not influenced by sections of programmes that are unlikely to contain political content. However, during the current survey a significant number of sports-themed stories appeared in the programmes' general news sections, and thereby secured their own category.



10.1% of airtime was classed as 'Other' – topics which received less than 20 minutes total coverage over the survey period, often in the form of single stand-alone reports.



An important procedural point is that the coding process prioritised the EU/Brexit category. For example, comments on the European Commission's position on China and Huawei were categorised as EU news rather than as a story on China, on Business, or a combination of the two themes. Similarly, the announcement of Britain's first post-Brexit imposition of sanctions on named individuals outside the auspices of the EU might reasonably, using an alternate methodology, been categorised as a domestic matter, but here was classified on account of the story being framed in relation to Brexit. As such, News-watch's approach means that the proportion of EU/Brexit stories in the table represent an *absolute maximum*. This has been historically important given that many early News-watch surveys drew particular attention to the paucity of EU coverage and the problems of 'bias by omission.'

More information on the wider news agenda appears in Section 2, which provides statistics for each of ten programmes individually.

## 1.5 EXTERNAL SOURCES

Each guest speaker was coded according to the contents of their contribution, rather than the established views of the person concerned, or their party affiliation. Although the fault-lines of the 2016 referendum to some extent persist, the debates over the EU and Brexit have become more nuanced, encompassing a wider range of policy areas and themes. Global statistics have been compiled here for reference, but further details of some of the specific coding decisions are provided in Section 3, which evaluates the coverage thematically and considers whether balance was achieved across individual EU/Brexit themes.

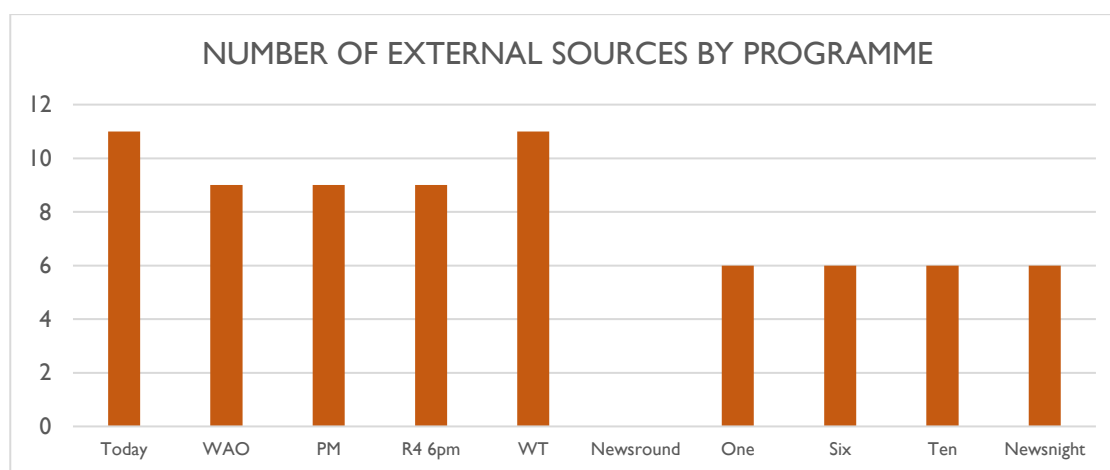
In total, there were 73 guest contributions to the BBC's EU and Brexit coverage across the ten surveyed programmes, delivering 14,495 words between them. News-watch coded each external source with regards to the contents of their contribution, as opposed to party affiliation or known opinions on the EU or Brexit. The guest speakers were as follows:

**Broadly Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit:** 38 Speakers (52% of headcount) 8,875 words (61.2% of word count)

**Broadly Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit:** 21 Speakers, (29% of headcount) 3,712 words (25.6% of word count)

**Neutral, Factual:** 14 speakers, (19% of headcount) 1908 words (13.2% of word count)

Although the sample of 73 speakers was relatively small in comparison to historical News-watch surveys<sup>7</sup>, the proportions mirror a pattern that has been consistently observed since 1999: Broadly Pro-EU voices are consistently given more airtime than those who oppose the EU or support Brexit.<sup>8</sup> Even after the Leave victory in the 2016 referendum, this imbalance has persisted – the 11 News-watch surveys undertaken since 2016 have recorded Anti-Brexit guests outnumbering Pro-Brexit guests by a factor of 2:1.<sup>9</sup> The table and graph show the numbers of external sources who spoke in feature reports, interviews and bulletin items, either in the form of live contributions or shorter pre-recorded ‘soundbites’.



Programme	Today	Newsround	WAO	PM	R4 6pm	WT	One	Six	Ten	Newsnight	Total
No. of Speakers	11	0	9	9	9	11	6	6	6	6	73

Today and the World Tonight featured the joint-highest number of guests commenting on Brexit or EU matters, with each programme including 11 guest contributions. Newsround, having delivered no Brexit or EU coverage over the eight day interval, carried no contributions from external sources.

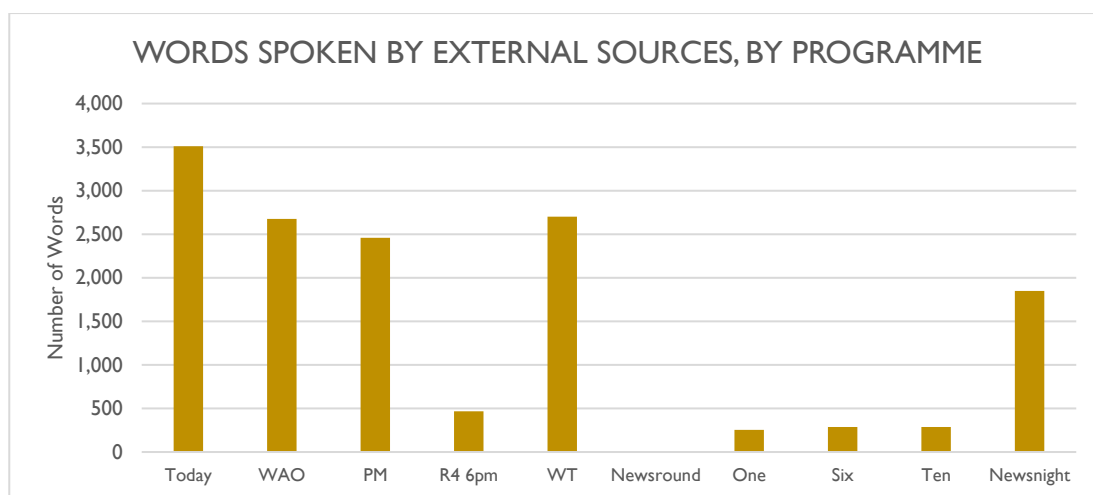
## 1.6 WORD-COUNTS PER PROGRAMME

The full transcripts of each programme item were analysed and word-counts generated for all contributors on EU/Brexit themes during the survey interval, amounting to 111,820 words. The chart shows how these words were distributed across each programme.

<sup>7</sup> 7,023 external sources contributed to EU/Brexit items in the 34 News-watch surveys undertaken between September 2002 and the General Election in December 2019. This amounts to an average of 207 recorded sources per survey.

<sup>8</sup> Details of the imbalances recorded in early surveys is available in the paper *Brussels Broadcasting Corporation?* Written by News-watch for Civitas in 2018, <http://civitas.org.uk/content/files/brusselsbroadcastingcorporation.pdf>

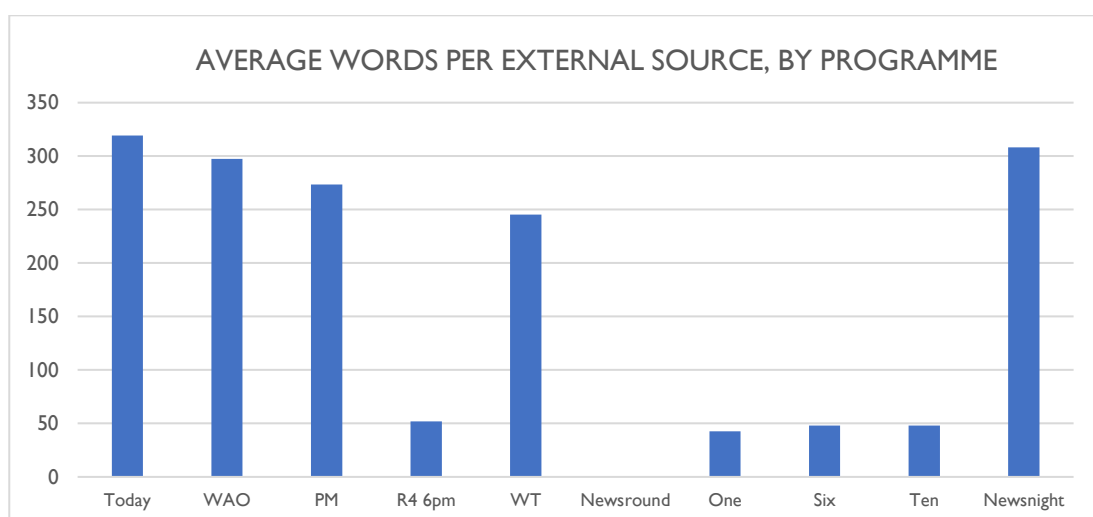
<sup>9</sup> <https://news-watch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/BBC-Bias-Against-Brexit-News-watch-Surveys-since-the-2016-referendum-.pdf>



Programme	Today	WAO	PM	R4 6pm	WT	Newsround	One	Six	Ten	Newsnight	Total
Word Count	3,511	2,677	2,460	466	2,700	0	256	288	288	1,849	14,495

Today carried the most content from guest speakers, a product of the programme's substantially longer running time coupled with a significant proportion of its output each morning being based around in-depth interviews with invited guests. The World at One, PM, The World Tonight and Newsnight, with a similar emphasis on interview and debate, also carried a comparatively high number of words from external sources. The bulletin-oriented broadcasts – the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News and three BBC TV News programmes – provided far less space, a consequence of both their shorter running times and structural focus on 'soundbite' contributions.

An analysis was also undertaken to assess the average number of words per external source, by programme:



Programme	Today	WAO	PM	R4 6pm	WT	Newsround	One	Six	Ten	Newsnight	Total
Av. Words per Source	319	297	273	52	245	0	43	48	48	308	199

On this metric, Today gave the most space, on average, to sources discussing Brexit or the EU, with 319 words per speaker, marginally more than The World at One (297) and PM (273). Again, the 'bulletin'-style programmes – the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News and the three television news programmes – had much lower averages, with between 43 and 52 words per speaker, reflecting their structural reliance on soundbites as opposed to long-form interviews.

The table categorises the on-air sources featured by the ten programmes during the eight day survey period in July 2020 and places them in order of space allotted to each, as revealed by the percentage of words spoken.

Category	No. of Sources	Words	% of Words
UK Politicians	40	7,039	48.6%
Academics	3	1,519	10.5%
EU Politicians	5	1,387	9.6%
Business, Economist, Financial Institution	4	1,071	7.4%
Care Sector	7	1,009	7.0%
Campaign Groups	4	721	5.0%
Think Tank	1	545	3.8%
Professional Bodies	1	494	3.4%
Journalist/Media	2	256	1.8%
Non-UK, Non-EU Politicians	2	179	1.2%
Civil Servants	1	120	0.8%
Quangos	2	94	0.6%
Celebrity/Arts/Culture	1	61	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>14,495</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the table shows, UK politicians accounted for almost half of the total space allotted to those discussing EU and Brexit matters. Unusually for a News-watch survey, none of the ten programmes carried vox pop opinion on the EU or Brexit over survey interval. The next section assesses the domestic political contributions in closer detail.

## 1.7 UK POLITICAL SOURCES

Party	Number of Speakers	Word Count	% of Sources	% of Words
Conservative Party	27	4,344	68%	61.7%
Labour Party	9	1,340	23%	19.0%
Liberal Democrats	2	19	5%	0.3%
Brexit Party	1	668	2.5%	9.5%
Crossbench	1	668	2.5%	9.5%
Total	40	7,039	100%	100%

Conservative MPs were the most prevalent source, accounting for 68% of all politicians, and with three times as many appearances as Labour. However, their attitudes towards the EU varied. Only around two thirds of the Conservative contributors (19 in total) voiced clear support of the government position on Brexit, the remainder were coded as neutral (for example, Dominic Raab speaking about domestic

legislation that happened to be the first sanctions announcement post-Brexit) or spoke negatively of Brexit.

As the next section explores, with only 21 Pro-Brexit speakers in total, this weighting towards Conservative politicians also had a significant negative impact on the ‘breadth of opinion’ available to viewers and listeners.

## 1.8 BREADTH OF OPINION

Across our output as a whole, we must be inclusive, reflecting a breadth and diversity of opinion. Breadth and diversity of opinion may require not just a political and cultural range, but, on occasions, reflection of the variations between urban and rural, older and younger, poorer and wealthier, the innovative and the status quo, etc. It may involve exploration of perspectives in different communities, interest groups and geographic areas. (BBC Editorial Guidelines)<sup>10</sup>

In 2019, Ofcom – as the BBC’s regulator following the disbanding of the BBC Trust – commissioned Cardiff University’s School of Journalism, Media and Culture to produce an assessment of BBC News and Current Affairs<sup>11</sup>, as part of its second Annual Report.<sup>12</sup> Cardiff described their remit as to ‘assess the range and depth of BBC news’ and was ‘not designed to examine the impartiality of news reporting’<sup>13</sup> This was an odd omission, given the centrality of ‘due impartiality’ and ‘false equivalence’ to the main Ofcom report.<sup>14</sup>

The Cardiff researchers monitored a range of broadcast and online content from the BBC and from other providers, for a three-week interval in July 2019. For the most part, they studiously avoided exploring questions concerning relative balance between guest contributors, and the published data which focused on sources contributing to the Brexit debate appeared deliberately vague.<sup>15</sup> Cardiff did, however, briefly mention balance within Brexit coverage, and decided that there had not been enough contributions from the EU sources:

Very few items substantively covered Brexit from the standpoint of the European Commission or other EU member states. When these viewpoints came to the fore, they provided useful insights that might have helped audiences understand political relations between the UK, the EU and its member states.<sup>16</sup>

However, Cardiff’s data actually indicated that, of the 129 contributors to BBC programmes and online services, 17 (13%) were from the EU institutions, or were politicians from member states.<sup>17</sup> Further, all

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/guidelines>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/bbc-operating-framework/performance/bbc-annual-report>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/173735/second-bbc-annual-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/173735/second-bbc-annual-report.pdf) pp.25-26

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf) In the table on page 101, presented as part of ‘Case Study 2: Brexit’, the Cardiff researchers did not expand on their category of ‘Elected UK parties and politicians’ by presenting the names of sources, their party or viewpoint. However, they did precisely this in ‘Case Study 4: Climate Change’ (pp.140-142) which listed contributors by name and decided whether they were critical or supportive in tone towards the government’s ‘zero emissions by 2050’ announcement. This omission in the Brexit section obscures who was given airtime and prevents other researchers either checking their work or creating further statistics based on their data.

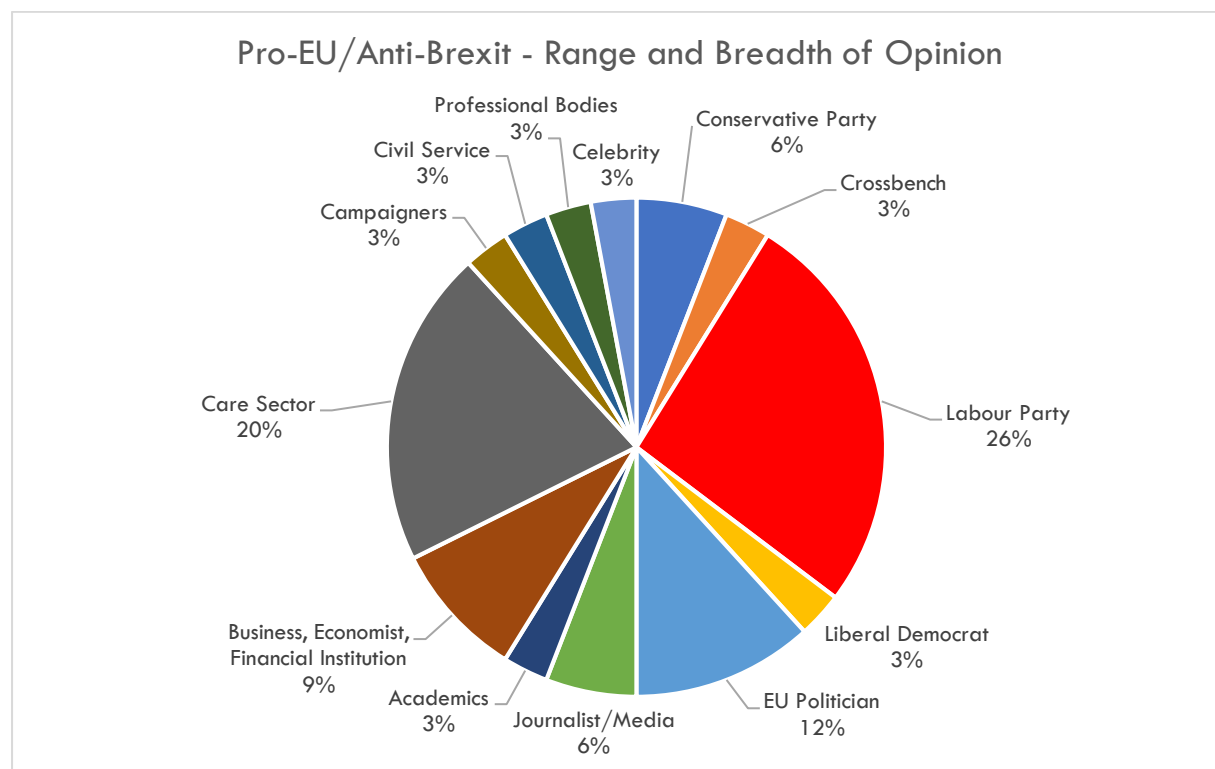
<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/174205/bbc-news-review-content-analysis-full-report.pdf) p.100

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.101, data from non-BBC Channels have been omitted by News-watch to facilitate this calculation.

17 of these EU sources appeared in broadcast output, on either radio or television. As such, if the online component is set aside, EU politicians accounted for almost a quarter (24%) of all BBC broadcast sources catalogued during Cardiff's three-week survey. Indeed, on the Today programme alone, politicians from EU member states (8 in total) were given almost exact parity with UK politicians (9 in total).<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, due to how Cardiff chose to present its data, it is impossible to establish how the EU proportion compared to the quantity of Anti-EU or Pro-Brexit speakers, or whether this issue was even considered.

During this News-watch survey, the ten BBC programmes included 73 external sources. The data was assessed to analyse precisely the range of views being expressed, to see whether the programmes were truly reflecting 'the breadth and diversity of opinion' on both sides of the Brexit debate. Setting aside for a moment the inherent 2:1 imbalance between pro-EU and anti-EU speakers, were the arguments on each side delivered by a comparable 'breadth of opinion'?

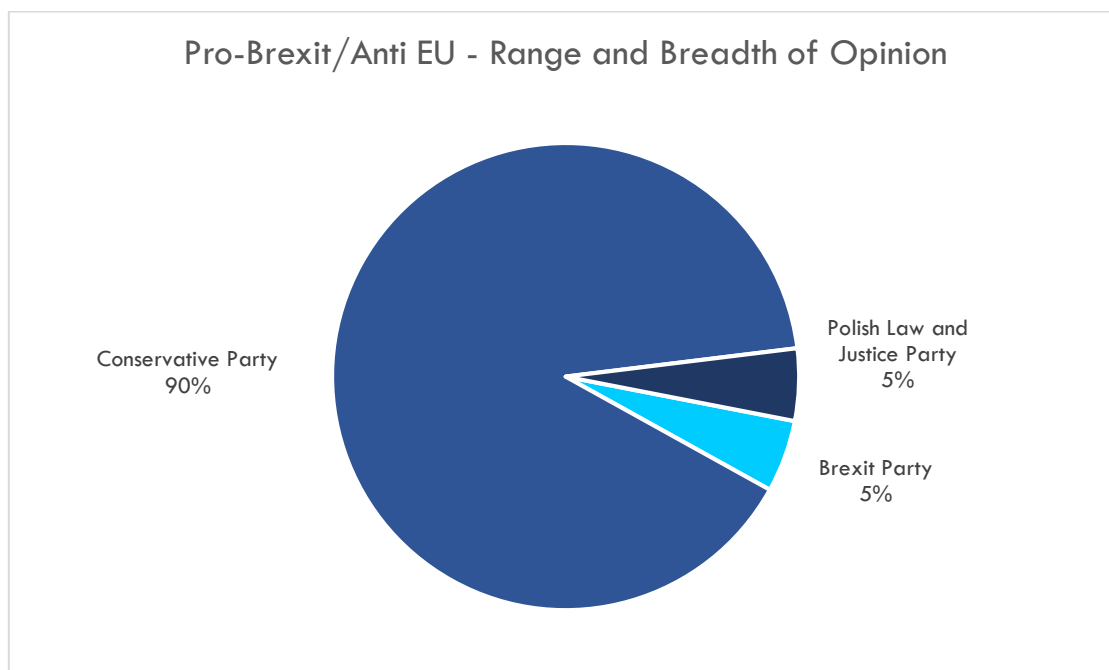
All speakers who expressed a positive or negative position on the EU or Brexit were coded according to their political party, organisation or profession as previously outlined in the table in Section 1.6<sup>19</sup> As the chart illustrates, the Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit perspective was articulated by a wide range of contributors, deriving from 13 distinct categories. Exactly half were politicians: Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Crossbench and EU politicians. The other half were representatives of a wide range of occupations and professions, including Business, journalism, academia, the care sector and the civil service.



<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The 14 guests who provided a neutral or factual contribution have been excluded.

By contrast, all of the Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit opinion came from politicians, and overwhelmingly from the Conservative Party. Single appearances from Richard Tice of the Brexit Party and Radoslaw Fogiel from the Polish Law and Justice Party were set alongside 19 contributions from the Conservatives, leading to an extremely narrow range of voices, as the next chart indicates:



The BBC and its regulators have regularly used 'breath of opinion' as a proxy for impartiality and as a principal metric in assessing the Corporation's impartiality.<sup>20</sup> When Chairman of the BBC Trust, Rona Fairhead, gave evidence to the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee in January 2015, she said:

We therefore have the public purpose remit and it is also our obligation to ensure that the level of impartial, independent journalism is appropriate. By "impartial" we mean including breadth of opinion.

News-watch has regularly drawn attention to the danger of using the two concepts interchangeably.<sup>21</sup> While the range of guests is certainly important, to focus on this aspect alone disregards many equally significant indicators: tone, frequency of interruption, the framing of debate and the subject of questioning, the positioning of interviews within programmes, and the problems of bias by omission – whether omission of particular speakers, specific themes, or entire stories. A disproportionate emphasis

<sup>20</sup> See, for example the Stuart Prebble report for the BBC Trust in 2012: 'Trust review of the breadth of opinion reflected in the BBC's output' [https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/our\\_work/editorial\\_standards/impartiality/breadth\\_opinion.html](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/our_work/editorial_standards/impartiality/breadth_opinion.html), a follow-up the 2007 report by John Bridcut, From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/18\\_06\\_07impartialitybbc.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/18_06_07impartialitybbc.pdf). As noted earlier in this section, Ofcom's second Annual Review of the BBC directed to Cardiff University to undertake a content analysis designed to investigate the 'range and depth' of news rather than investigate its impartiality.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, News-watch's submission in response to Rona Fairhead and Richard Ayre's appearance before the European Scrutiny Committee: <https://news-watch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/News-watch-EuSC-Response-with-Supporting-Attachments-pdf>

on ‘breadth of opinion’ also shields the BBC from criticism, effectively allowing almost any permutation of contributors, even if this results in extreme numerical imbalance.<sup>22</sup>

However, putting aside the problem of deploying a narrow metric to assess the much broader issue of impartiality, the findings of this survey show that BBC production staff and journalists treated the two sides of the EU/Brexit debate very unequally, on a measure that they themselves hold to be central to the question of ‘due impartiality’.

During the survey, there was a lack of imagination in the selection of interviewees and in the choice of soundbites. There were no pro-Brexit contributions from any area outside of politics, nothing from business, academia, journalists, professional bodies, nor think tanks. Similarly, the surveyed programmes included no input from members of the general public, and no advocates of Brexit from the political left.<sup>23</sup>

The exclusion and omission of these alternate views meant that the pro-Brexit case was articulated almost solely by the Conservatives. This narrowness was amplified because their views were pitched against a broad range of opposing voices from a variety of social and political spheres.

## 1.9 EU THEMES

Brexit and EU coverage across the ten programmes was categorised according to theme.

Theme	Airtime	Proportion
<b>Post-Brexit Immigration</b>	46m	28.5%
<b>Post-Brexit Borders</b>	36m 45s	22.8%
<b>Britain Imposing first post-Brexit Sanctions</b>	23m 15s	14.4%
<b>Launch of Post-Brexit Information Campaign</b>	14m 45s	9.1%
<b>Member States and the EU</b>	12m	7.4%
<b>Intelligence Committee and Russia Report</b>	11m 30s	7.1%
<b>EU, Brexit and Covid-19</b>	7m 45s	4.8%
<b>Post-Brexit Business and Trade</b>	6m 15s	3.9%
<b>General Brexit Comment</b>	2m 15s	1.4%
<b>Brexit and Scotland</b>	45s	0.5%
<b>EU Foreign Policy</b>	15s	0.2%

Between them, coverage of Post-Brexit Immigration and Post-Brexit Borders was 51.3% of airtime. Stories in these categories included: the Home Secretary Priti Patel outlining details of a post-Brexit points-based immigration system; a leaked memo from the International Trade Secretary warning of the

<sup>22</sup> For example, a complaint to the BBC based on a January 2013 edition of Newsnight in which 18 pro-EU speakers outnumbered a single supporter of withdrawal by 18 to 1 was rejected by the Editorial Standards Committee, as the Committee ruled that the editorial decisions in choosing the contributors were reasonable. <https://news-watch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2.-Editorial-Standards-Committee-decision-on-Newsnight-Complaint-17-November-2013.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> This has been an ongoing pattern in the BBC’s coverage of EU matters, in spite of opinion polling by the British Election Study which found that 37% of Labour voters in the 2015 General Election had voted Leave in the following year’s referendum.



dangers of delaying full border checks after Brexit; a warning from the European Commission that Britons would lose the right to use a UK driving licence and take pets on visits to the EU; and a government announcement that £700m would be spent on the UK's border systems in preparation for the end of the transition period. The 11 EU/Brexit themes are analysed in greater detail in Section 3.

## SECTION 2: INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMME DATA

All news programmes have specific obligations to achieve due impartiality. They cannot rely on what is covered elsewhere in the schedule to make up for internal imbalances.<sup>24</sup> An exception would be if cross-programme content was properly signposted. Nothing in the survey period was in this category.

Individual data from each of the ten monitored programmes is presented below.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.1 RADIO 4, TODAY

Today is BBC Radio 4's flagship news and current affairs programme, broadcast each weekday morning between 6am and 9am, and between 7am and 9am on Saturday. It regularly comprises a range of content: half-hourly news bulletins, newspaper reviews, dedicated Business News sections, sports news, programme trailers, the religious affairs slot 'Thought for the Day', a 'Puzzle for Today', along with 'feature' items focusing on newsworthy matters: two-way discussions between presenters and reporters, pre-recorded correspondent packages, and live interviews.

#### Airtime

News-watch bases its airtime calculations on Today's 'features': the interviews, discussions and correspondent reports that account for approximately two thirds of the programme's total airtime.<sup>26</sup> During this survey, Today devoted exactly 41 minutes of its feature coverage to European Election or Brexit-related themes.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
<b>Today</b>	<b>13 h 5 min</b>	<b>41 m</b>	<b>5.2%</b>

Since 1999, News-watch has monitored, tracked and analysed 394 full weeks of the Today programme, equating to 2,364 individual editions with a combined airtime of 6,698 hours. This research has established that, prior to the current survey, Today has devoted, an average, 8.2% of its feature airtime to the discussion of EU themes.<sup>27</sup> This percentage has been increased by high volumes of Brexit coverage in the seven surveys undertaken since the 2016 Referendum, which were often timed to coincide with key events in the Brexit process.<sup>28</sup> The table lists the 32 News-watch surveys undertaken between September 2002 and December 2019, along with the data collected during the most recent investigation.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RT-v-Ofcom-approved-judgment-27.3.20.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> News-watch surveys general include the most recently available listening figures for each programme. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused the Radio Joint Audience Research (RAJAR) to freeze its operations after the first quarter of 2020, until fieldwork is able to recommence.

<sup>26</sup> Focusing on these elements ensures that airtime totals are not skewed by repeated content – for example, the half-hourly bulletins, the newspaper reviews, nor by the 'non-news' elements of Today which include sports reports, weather items and trailers for other BBC programmes.

<sup>27</sup> The figures from Survey 25 in this table have been excluded from this calculation, given that only Today's Business News items were monitored.

<sup>28</sup> The average feature airtime given over to EU matters in the 24 pre-referendum News-watch surveys was 6.9%, in the seven post referendum surveys, (excluding survey 25) the average has been 24.9%, and has included two atypically short studies on specific Brexit-related events.

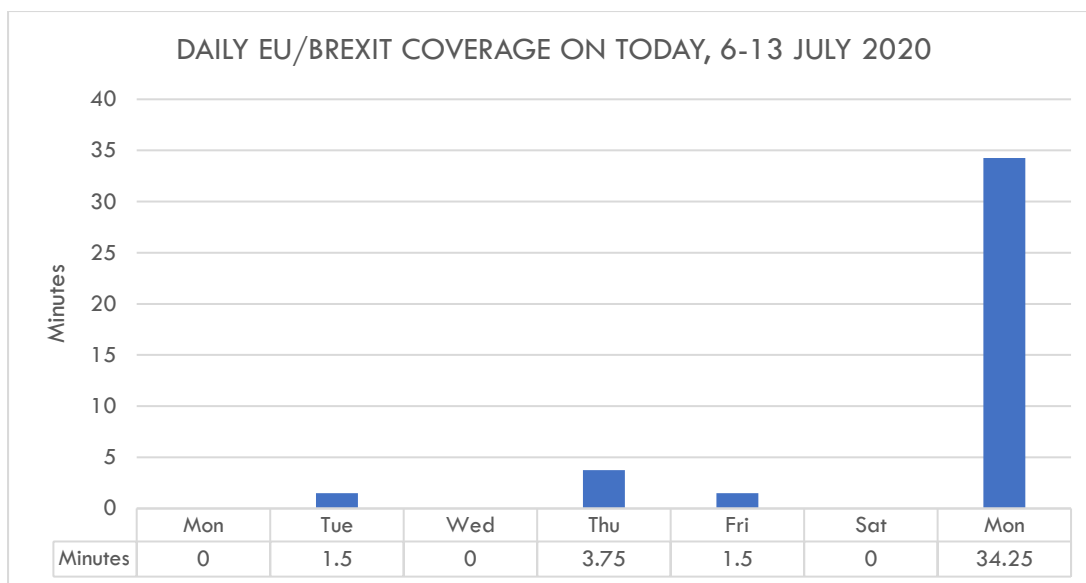
	Survey Date	Weeks	Total Airtime (minutes)	EU Airtime (minutes)	Proportion of EU coverage
1	September 2002 – July 2003	47	31,255	1750	5.6%
2	September – December 2003	12	7,980	455	5.7%
3	March – June 2004	13	8,216	871	9.8%
4	October – December 2004	10	6,650	365	5.5%
5	March – June 2005	15	9,975	1082	10.8%
6	October – December 2005	9	5,985	489	8.2%
7	February – June 2006	16	10,640	437	4.1%
8	September – December 2006	14	9,310	275	2.9%
9	March – June 2007	14	9,310	326	3.5%
10	September – December 2007	14	9,310	386	4.1%
11	March – June 2008	12	7,980	263	3.3%
12	September – December 2008	14	9,310	384	4.1%
13	April – June 2009	6	4,206	228	5.4%
14	September – December 2009	13	8,577	442	5.1%
15	March – May 2010	6	3,961	245	6.2%
16	September – December 2010	13	8,493	444	5.2%
17	March – June 2011	13	8,617	532	6.2%
18	October – December 2011	11	7,298	1639	22.5%
19	April – June 2012	12	7,938	1112	14.0%
20	September – December 2012	13	8,640	540	6.2%
21	April – June 2013	12	7,929	538	6.8%
22	September – December 2013	14	9,207	470	5.1%
23	April – June 2014	6	3,979	412	10.3%
24	March – May 2015	6	3,990	252	6.1%
25	June – December 2016 (Business Slots only)	26	n/a	759	n/a
26	March – Apr 2017	1	667	305	46%
27	May – June 2017	5	3,433	542	15.9%
28	October – November 2017	4	2,660	451	16.9%
29	September- October 2018	5	3,295	967	29.3%
30	January 2019	0.5	353	287	81.3%
31	April – May 2019	7	4,639	1320	28.5%
32	November – December 2019	5	3,443	743	21.6%
33	July 2020	1.1	785	41	5.2%

As the table shows, EU/Brexit coverage during the most recent survey was the lowest recorded by any News-watch survey since the Winter 2013 monitoring interval (Survey 22 in the table above). A more detailed discussion of the shape of the wider news agenda – and, in particular, pandemic-related coverage, is discussed in more detail in the subsequent section which analyses Today's EU/Brexit coverage in the context of the wider news agenda.

## EU Coverage

Today transmitted 19 items related to either EU/Brexit issues during the eight day survey. There were 5 bulletin reports, 2 mentions of EU stories in the 'newspaper review' section, and 12 'features', with a total duration of 41 minutes. In addition, there were 5 occasions on which EU or Brexit matters were mentioned in passing.

The chart shows the number of minutes of EU coverage broadcast on the seven editions surveyed.



As the chart shows, the majority of Today's EU/Brexit feature coverage (84%) appeared in the Monday 13 July edition. The programme carried no feature coverage at all on Monday 6, Wednesday 8 or Saturday 11 July, and the remaining three editions each delivered under five minutes of EU-related discussion.

#### **Today and the Wider News Agenda:**

The table in Section 1.4 listed the 13 main news themes identified during the survey (subjects which received more than 20 minutes of coverage in total across the ten surveyed programmes). The data for Today was isolated, and the programme covered 11 of these 13 themes:

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19 Pandemic	458.25	58.4%
China	51	6.5%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	43.5	5.5%
EU/Brexit	41	5.2%
Obituaries <sup>29</sup>	29.5	3.8%
Environment	26.25	3.3%
Hospital Treatment Scandals/Inquiries	19	2.4%
US Elections	16	2.0%
Business	10.25	1.3%
Sport	6.5	0.8%
Ghislaine Maxwell	5.5	0.7%
Other	78.50	10.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>785.25</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the table shows, Today devoted 58.4% of its airtime to issues surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. EU/Brexit-themed stories were the fourth most prevalent, after stories on China (including ongoing

<sup>29</sup> Notable deaths during the included composer Ennio Morricone, singer Dame Vera Lynn and footballer Jack Charlton, and obituaries were featured on eight out of the ten programmes (only Newsround and The World Tonight carried no obituaries)

concerns about Huawei and the 5G network, and the country's actions in Hong Kong) and stories relating to the Black Lives Matter protests, including issues around police stop and search procedures. 10% of Today's airtime was devoted to 'other' themes.

## Speakers

Over the survey interval, 11 guests contributed to Today's EU/Brexit coverage, comprising 9 interviews and 2 pre-recorded soundbites. In total, these speakers delivered 3,511 words. All contributions were analysed using the programme transcripts and coded on the contents of their contribution.

The 11 contributions on Today were as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Dr Huiyao Wang	Advisor to the Chinese government	Neutral/Factual	Interview	87
Philip Hammond	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Interview	271
Danny Mortimer	Cavandish Coalition	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	435
Jane Foley	Rabobank	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	200
Damian Green	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	482
Professor Alan Manning	LSE	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	673
Government Advert	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	71
Kate Lester	Diamond Logistics	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	477
James Greenham	EMS Physio	Neutral/Factual	Interview	264
Damian Green	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	57
Daniella dos Santos	British Veterinary Association	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	494

**7 speakers (64%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 2,818 words, or **80% of the total words spoken.**

**2 speakers (18%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. They contributed 342 words or **9.7% of the total.**

**2 speakers (18%)** gave a neutral, factual or mixed view on the EU/Brexit. They delivered 351 words, or **10% of the total words spoken.**

Only Conservative MP Philip Hammond and the excerpt from the Government's 'Let's Get Going' information campaign offered any positives on Brexit. Conversely those outlining the potential negatives of Brexit were given far more space to outline their concerns.

## 2.2 CBBC, NEWSROUND

Newsround is a bulletin aimed at children aged 6 to 10 years old, and three five minute episodes are broadcast each day on the CBBC channel, including at weekends. During the survey it carried no content related to either the EU or Brexit:

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
Newsround	1h 55m 15 sec	0m	0%

## Newsround and the Wider Agenda

The programme picked up on just five of the 13 main news themes identified in Section 1.4. As with the adult programmes in the survey, reports relating to the pandemic occupied a significant amount of airtime, although the focus was heavily on the matter of how children had been coping during lockdown and when they might be returning to school.

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19 Pandemic	66.5	57.8%
Sport	13	11.3%
Environment	9.75	8.5%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	8.25	7.2%
Battle of Britain	7	6.1%
Other	10.5	9.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>785.25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Although a number of specific EU themes during the survey (see table in Section 1.8) were perhaps too complex or technical for Newsround's target audience, others – for example the launch of the government's information campaign – could have been explained in simple terms, but were roundly ignored.

## 2.3 RADIO 4, THE WORLD AT ONE

The World at One airs at 1pm from Monday to Friday. The programme describes itself as 'Britain's leading political programme' and states, 'With a reputation for rigorous and original investigation, it is required listening in Westminster'<sup>30</sup>. The programme runs for 45 minutes each weekday and begins with approximately six minutes of bulletins, in a similar format to those broadcast as part of the Today programme. The remaining part of The World at One comprises 'features': discussion with correspondents, journalist reports and interviews with invited guests.

On Wednesday 8 July 2020 it was extended to 1 h 30 min to allow extended discussion of a statement to MPs by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak. For the purposes of this survey, data from **The World This Weekend**, which broadcasts for half an hour at 1pm each Sunday, is included in the statistics for its sister programme.

The World at One broadcast 23 minutes of Brexit/EU-themed coverage during the eight day survey interval, or 8% of its available feature airtime. The programme also carried two bulletin items on EU/Brexit themes.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
<b>The World at One</b>	<b>4h 47m 30 sec</b>	<b>23m</b>	<b>8%</b>

<sup>30</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world\\_at\\_one/746514.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world_at_one/746514.stm)

## The World at One and the Wider Agenda

The table in Section 1.4 listed the 13 main news themes covered across the ten programmes during the survey interval. As the table shows, The World at One covered 7 of these main news themes.

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19 Pandemic	179	62.3%
China	23.25	8.1%
EU/Brexit	23	8.0%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	15.25	5.3%
Sport	7	2.4%
Obituaries	5.50	1.9%
Ghislaine Maxwell	3	1.0%
Other	31.50	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>287.50</b>	<b>100%</b>

EU/Brexit themes were the third most prevalent theme during the survey interval with 8% of coverage, just behind discussion of China. Covid-19 was the most widely-discussed issue, accounting for 62.3% of the programmes available 'feature' airtime.

## Speakers

Over the survey interval, 9 guests contributed to The World at One's EU/Brexit coverage, comprising 7 interviews and 2 pre-recorded soundbites. In total, these speakers delivered 2,677 words. All contributions were analysed using the programme transcripts and coded on the contents of their contribution. The 9 contributions were as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Kevin Hollinrake	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	Interview	25
Philip Hammond	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	104
Pamela Nash	Scotland in the Union	Neutral/Factual	Interview	67
Dominic Grieve	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	79
Sir Malcolm Rifkind	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	682
David Salisbury	Chatham House	Neutral/Factual	Interview	545
Dr Peter Walsh	Migration Observatory Oxford	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	459
Joyce Pinfield	National Care Association	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	329
Anita Prazmowska	London School of Economics	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	387

**5 speakers (56%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 1,936 words, or **72% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speaker (11%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. He contributed 104 words or **4% of the total words spoken**.

**3 speakers (33%)** gave a neutral, factual or mixed view on the EU/Brexit. They delivered 637 words, or **24% of the total words spoken**.

The World at One thus contained a significant imbalance in favour of speakers who made pro-EU or Anti-Brexit points, with a headcount ratio of 5:1 and almost 19:1 in terms of actual words delivered.

## 2.4 BBC1, NEWS AT ONE

BBC News at One is the afternoon news bulletin broadcast on BBC1 and the BBC News Channel every weekday, with a running time of 30 minutes. The programme carries news items, location reports by journalists and live 'two-ways' between the news reader and correspondents. Contributions from guests tend to be in the form of pre-recorded soundbites, but there are also occasional live interviews. For the purposes of this survey, the lunchtime editions of the BBC Weekend News were amalgamated into the data from the News at One.

News at One broadcast 4 minutes and 30 seconds of Brexit-EU coverage over the eight-day survey, amounting to 2.4% of available airtime, the lowest proportion other than Newsround, which had featured no EU coverage at all.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
News at One	3h 6m 45s	4m 30s	2.4%

### News at One and the Wider Agenda

News at One covered 11 of the 13 main news themes listed in the table in Section 1.4.

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19 Pandemic	123	65.9%
Obituaries	12.25	6.6%
Sport	9.25	5.0%
Johnny Depp	8.25	4.4%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	7.75	4.1%
Hospital Treatment Scandals/Inquiries	5.25	2.8%
EU/Brexit	4.50	2.4%
Battle of Britain	4.25	2.3%
Environment	4	2.1%
China	2.25	1.2%
Business	0.25	0.1%
Other	5.75	65.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>186.75</b>	<b>100%</b>

The programme devoted almost two thirds of its airtime to stories relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. EU/Brexit themed reports were only the seventh-most prevalent, with a host of other themes receiving more airtime.



## Speakers

6 guests contributed to the News at One's EU/Brexit coverage (a chorus of Liberal Democrats shouting 'Stop Brexit' were counted as a single speaker for the purposes of the analysis). All appearances were pre-recorded 'soundbite' contributions, there were no live interviews.

In total, these speakers contributed 256 words and were coded on the contents of their contributions, as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Chorus	Liberal Democrat	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	2
Ed Davey	Liberal Democrat	Neutral Factual	Soundbite	17
Kieran Shudall	Musician	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	61
Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	78
Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	49
Micheal Martin	Irish Prime Minister	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	49

**4 speakers (66%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 161 words, or **63% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speaker (17.5%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. He contributed 78 words or **30% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speakers (17.5%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. He delivered 17 words, or **6% of the total words spoken**.

News at One contained a significant weighting towards Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit speakers. Only a statement from Michael Gove offered a pro-Brexit perspective. Ed Davey, Liberal Democrat leadership candidate was, in spite of his strongly-held pro-EU views, categorised as neutral on this occasion, as he said he believed his party had made a strategic mistake at the 2019 general election by focusing so heavily on a single issue – 'Stop Brexit' – although he did not disown the policy itself.

## 2.5 RADIO 4, PM

PM is broadcast on Radio 4 between 5pm and 6pm from Monday to Friday and 5pm to 5:30pm and Saturdays. It features regular bulletins, discussions with BBC correspondents and contributions from invited guests in both soundbite and interview form.

In total, PM devoted 23 minutes and 15 seconds to EU/Brexit related news, or 7.4% of its available feature airtime. The programme also included two bulletin items on these themes.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
PM	5h 16m	23m 15s	7.4%

## PM and the Wider Agenda

PM covered 7 of the 13 'main stories' as detailed in Section 1.4, with 9.3% of the available airtime devoted to 'other' news. The categories were as follows:

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19 Pandemic	211	66.8%
EU	23.25	7.4%
Business	16.25	5.1%
Obituaries	11.75	3.7%
Environment	11.25	3.6%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	11	3.5%
Johnny Depp	2.25	0.7%
Other	29.25	9.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>100%</b>

PM had the highest proportion of Covid-19 coverage across the surveyed programmes, accounting for over two-thirds of its total available feature airtime across the seven monitored editions. EU coverage was the second most prevalent theme.

## Speakers

9 guests contributed to the PM's EU/Brexit coverage, with five interviews and four soundbites. In total, these speakers contributed 2460 words and were coded on the contents of their contributions, as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	54
Bill Browder	Campaigner	Neutral/Factual	Interview	499
Polly Toynbee	The Guardian	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	135
Chris Grayling	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	120
Lord Ricketts	Crossbench Peer	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	668
John Elledge	New Statesman	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	121
Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	133
Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	62
Richard Tice	Brexit Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Interview	668

**4 speakers (44%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 986 words, or **40% of the total words spoken**.

**3 speaker (33%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. They contributed 921 words or **37% of the total words spoken**.

**2 speakers (22%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. They delivered 17 words, or **22% of the total words spoken**.

PM featured an evenly-balanced selection of speakers, with just a small, 65 word, differential in favour of those who were pro-EU or anti-Brexit.

## 2.6 RADIO 4, SIX O'CLOCK NEWS

The Radio 4 Six O'Clock News broadcasts for half an hour each weekday evening and fifteen minutes at weekends. The programme features a newsreader and correspondents, although there is no interaction between them. Guest contributors appear in the form of short 'soundbites' and there are no full interview sequences.

During the eight-day survey, the R4 Six O'Clock News allotted 15 minutes to the discussion of EU/Brexit stories, or 7.8% of its available airtime:

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
R4 Six O'Clock News	3h 13m 15s	15 m	7.8%

### Six O'Clock News and the Wider Agenda

12 of the 13 'main stories' as detailed in Section 1.4 were carried by the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News, the only of the thirteen not to receive any coverage was the US elections.

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19	88.25	45.7%
EU/Brexit	15	7.8%
China	12.75	6.6%
Obituaries	7.5	3.9%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	6.75	3.5%
Sport	6.5	3.4%
Environment	6	3.1%
Hospital Treatment Scandals/Inquiries	6	3.1%
Business	5.25	2.7%
Johnny Depp	4.25	2.2%
Battle of Britain	2.25	1.2%
Ghislaine Maxwell	0.5	0.3%
Other	32.25	16.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>193.25</b>	<b>100%</b>

Although Covid-19 stories dominated the agenda on the Six O'Clock News, this weighting was less pronounced than on some of the other surveyed programmes, with 45.7% of airtime devoted to the theme. EU/Brexit themed news received the second-highest coverage volume.

### Speakers

9 guests contributed to R4 Six O'Clock News's EU/Brexit coverage. In keeping with the format of the programme, all were soundbites. These speakers, in total, spoke 466 words and were coded on the contents of their contributions, as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	69
Jens Spahn	German Health Minister	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	72
Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	43
Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	47
Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	73
Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	34
Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	39
Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	38
Joyce Pinfield	National Care Association	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	51

**5 speakers (56%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 243 words, or **52% of the total words spoken**.

**3 speaker (33%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. He contributed 154 words or **33% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speaker (11%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. He delivered 69 words, or **15% of the total words spoken**.

The Six O'Clock News delivered a clear numerical weighting towards sources taking a Pro-EU or Anti-Brexit position, and this also led to an imbalance in the space allocated to this position, as opposed to those making points to the contrary.

## 2.7 BBC1, NEWS AT SIX

BBC1's early evening news bulletin, broadcast from Monday to Friday with a running time of 28 minutes. The bulletin has the highest audience reach of the ten programmes in the survey. BARB figures show that in the first seven days of this survey, four editions of News at Six appeared in the list of 15 most-watched programmes,<sup>31</sup> with between 4.5 and 5 million viewers tuning in.

The programme carries news items, location reports by journalists and live 'two-ways' between the news reader and correspondents. Contributions from guests tend to be in the form of pre-recorded soundbites, but there are also occasional live interviews. For the purposes of this survey, the early evening editions of the BBC Weekend News were combined with News at Six.

News at Six delivered six minutes of EU/Brexit-related content over the eight-day interval, or 3.1% of its total output.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
News at Six	3h 16m 30s	6m	3.1%

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.barb.co.uk/viewing-data/four-screen-dashboard/> (search using calendar function)

## News at Six and the Wider Agenda

The programme covered nine of the 13 main news themes recorded during the survey as a whole, and listed in the table in Section 1.4. They were as follows:

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19	116.75	59.4%
Sport	17.25	8.8%
Obituaries	11.75	6%
Johnny Depp Libel Trial	9.50	4.8%
Hospital Treatment Scandals/Inquiries	8.25	4.2%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	6.50	3.3%
EU/Brexit	6.00	3.1%
China	4.75	2.4%
Battle of Britain	4.00	2%
Other	11.75	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>196.5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Again, stories about the Covid-19 pandemic dominated coverage, and EU/Brexit coverage was only the seventh most prevalent story.

## Speakers

Six speakers contributed to EU/Brexit-themed reports on the News at Six, as follows:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	78
Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	49
Raj Sehgal	Managing Director, ArmsCare	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	47
Nick Thomas Symonds	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	34
Kevin Foster	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	33
Professor Brian Bell	Migration Advisory Committee	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	47

**3 speakers (50%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 130 words, or **45% of the total words spoken**.

**2 speaker (33%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. He contributed 111 words or **39% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speaker (17%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. He delivered 47 words, or **16% of the total words spoken**.

News at Six thus delivered an imbalance in both headcount and wordcount towards the Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit perspective.

## 2.8 RADIO 4, THE WORLD TONIGHT

The World Tonight is broadcast for 45 minutes on each weekday evening at 10pm. The programme features news, analysis, interviews and comment. It has a heavier slant towards global issues than other programmes in the Radio 4 news cycle, but does carry domestic content. The World Tonight broadcast the largest proportion of EU/Brexit coverage among the ten surveyed programmes, with 23 minutes of coverage equating to 10.4% of its available airtime, along with two bulletin items.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
The World Tonight	3h 40m 45s	23m	10.4%

### The World Tonight and the Wider News Agenda

The programme covered six of the 13 main news themes as outlined in Section 1.4. They were as follows:

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19	111.25	50.4%
EU/Brexit	23	10.4%
China	20.25	9.2%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	13	5.9%
US Elections	6	2.7%
Business	4.75	2.2%
Other	42.5	19.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>220.75</b>	<b>100%</b>

As with all other monitored programmes, the impact and implications of the Covid-19 pandemic was by far the most widely covered news theme. EU/Brexit themes were the second most prevalent story, with 23 minutes of 'feature' airtime devoted to them.

### Speakers

The World Tonight's EU/Brexit coverage contained 11 contributions from external sources, who between them delivered 2,700 words across five interviews and six soundbites:

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	51
Bill Browder	Campaigner for Magnitsky	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	44
Liu Xiaoming	Chinese Ambassador	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	92
Tom Tugendhat	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Interview	546
Nathalie Tocci	Institute of International Affairs, Rome	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	661
Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	61
Radoslaw Fogiel	Polish Law and Justice Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Interview	199
Sophie in 't Veld	Dutch MEP	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Interview	406
Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	74
Caroline Abrahams	Age UK	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	111
Philip Dunne	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Interview	455

**4 speakers (36%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 1,239 words, or **46% of the total words spoken**.

**4 speaker (36%)** offered a broadly anti-EU opinion or spoke positively about Brexit. He contributed 1,274 words or **47% of the total words spoken**.

**3 speaker (27%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. They delivered 187 words, or **7% of the total words spoken**.

The World Tonight included an exact balance in the numbers of broadly pro-EU and broadly anti-EU speakers invited to contribute across the six monitored editions, with four from each perspective. In addition, the amount of space given to each broad viewpoint was also almost exactly balanced: Anti-EU/Pro Brexit contributors were allotted 1,274 words, and Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit contributors 1,239 words – a slight weighting of 35 words towards the Anti-EU sources.

## 2.9 BBC1, NEWS AT TEN

BBC News at Ten broadcasts 30 minutes of domestic and international news on weekdays. As with the aforementioned BBC television bulletins, the late evening edition of the **BBC Weekend News** was incorporated into the data.

Over the eight-day survey, News at Ten broadcast 7 minutes 15 seconds of EU/Brexit-related coverage, or 3.3% of its total airtime.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
<b>News at Ten</b>	<b>3h 40m 15s</b>	<b>7m 15s</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

News at Ten covered ten of the 13 main news themes outlined in the table in Section 1.4:

Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19	106.00	48.1%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	17.50	7.9%
Obituaries	13.50	6.1%
Sport	13.00	5.9%
China	12.25	5.6%
Hospital Treatment Scandals/Inquiries	12.25	5.6%
Johnny Depp Libel Trial	9.00	4.1%
EU/Brexit	7.25	3.3%
Battle of Britain	3.50	1.6%
Ghislaine Maxwell	0.50	0.2%
Other	25.50	11.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>220.25</b>	<b>100%</b>

EU/Brexit-related news was awarded low priority compared to other themes, and was only the eighth most prevalent subject on News at Ten during the survey interval.

## Speakers

News at Ten included six contributions from external sources, all of them soundbites, who between them contributed 288 words.

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	Soundbite	78
Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	49
Raj Sehgal	Managing Director, ArmsCare	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	47
Nick Thomas Symonds	Labour Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	34
Kevin Foster	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	Soundbite	33
Professor Brian Bell	UK Migration Advisory Committee	Neutral/Factual	Soundbite	47

**3 speakers (50%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 130 words, or **49% of the total words spoken**.

**2 speakers (33%)** offered a broadly positive opinion on Brexit. They contributed 111 words or **39% of the total words spoken**.

**1 speaker (17%)** gave a neutral view on the EU/Brexit. He delivered 47 words, or **16% of the total words spoken**.

The sources included on News at Ten replicated exactly those broadcast as part of the News at Six, and thus delivered an identical imbalance towards broadly pro-EU opinion.

## 2.10 BBC2, NEWSNIGHT

**Newsnight** is BBC2's flagship news and current affairs programme, broadcasting for around 40 minutes from Monday to Thursday and half an hour each Friday. It includes correspondent reports, and interviews and debates with invited guests. Over the eight day survey interval, Newsnight broadcast 18 minutes and 30 seconds of EU/Brexit related coverage, equating to 7.8% of its available airtime.

	Available Airtime	Brexit/EU	Brexit/EU %
Newsnight	3h 56m 45s	18m 30s	7.8%

Newsnight covered seven of the 13 main news themes, as identified in Section 1.4:



Theme	Airtime	%
Covid-19	126.75	53.5%
China	28.75	12.1%
Black Lives Matter/Racism	19.50	8.2%
EU/Brexit	18.50	7.8%
US Elections	13.75	5.8%
Ghislaine Maxwell	12.00	5.1%
Obituaries	3.5	1.5%
Other	12	5.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236.75</b>	<b>100%</b>

EU/Brexit news was the fourth most prevalent theme, after stories about the pandemic, China, and Black Lives Matter themes.

### Speakers

Newsnight included six contributions from external sources, two interviews and four soundbites, who between them contributed 1,849 words.

Name	Party or Organisation	Viewpoint	Type	Words
Steve Baker	Conservative Party	Conservative Anti	Soundbite	66
Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Conservative Anti	Soundbite	37
Aodhán Connolly	Northern Ireland Retail Consortium	Other Pro	Soundbite	130
Peter MacSwiney	Joint Customs Consultative Committee	Other Pro	Soundbite	120
Peter Bone	Conservative Party	Conservative Anti	Interview	514
Hilary Benn	Labour Party	Labour Pro	Interview	982

**3 speakers (50%)** offered a broadly pro-EU opinion or spoke negatively about Brexit. Combined, they delivered 1,232 words, or **67% of the total words spoken.**

**3 speakers (50%)** offered a broadly positive opinion on Brexit. They contributed 617 words or **33% of the total words spoken.**

**No speakers** provided a Neutral/Factual contribution.

Although the contributions to Newsnight were precisely balanced in terms of headcount, as the data shows, broadly pro-EU/Anti-Brexit contributors were given exactly double the space as those who were anti-EU/Pro-Brexit, leading to a sharp inequality.

### 2.11 Conclusion:

Of the nine monitored programmes that included guest contributors (Newsround thus excluded) only The World Tonight and Newsnight provided equal numbers of guests from the two sides of the EU debate, the remaining seven were weighted towards broadly Pro-EU or Anti-Brexit opinion.

PM and The World Tonight were relatively well-balanced in terms of the space allotted to guest speakers – PM had a weighting of 65 words towards Pro-EU opinion, and the World Tonight 35 words towards Anti-EU opinion. The word-count differentials on News at Six and News at Ten bulletins were also relatively minor, given the brevity of the contributions involved.

However, the remaining programmes – Today, The World at One, News at One, R4 Six O’Clock News and Newsnight (despite the latter’s headcount balance) – were each significantly weighted towards pro-EU opinion. On Today, for example, those offering positive opinions on the EU or negative opinions on Brexit were given eight times the space of those offering opinions to the contrary, and on The World at One this differential was *eighteen* times. These are glaring differentials, illustrating that the issues with the balance of external sources that News-watch has identified consistently since 1999 have continued unabated, even in the face of the Leave vote in the referendum.

## SECTION 3: THEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF EU COVERAGE

11 distinct EU/Brexit themes were covered across the ten monitored programmes. Some stories were carried across a raft of programmes, others less widely. The chart lists the identified themes in order of first appearance, shows in which programmes they appeared and indicates the total airtime awarded to each.

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
1. Britain Imposing first post-Brexit Sanctions	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		23m 15s
2. EU Foreign Policy			✓								15s
3. General Brexit Comment	✓			✓			✓				2m 15s
4. Post-Brexit Business and Trade	✓		✓		✓					✓	6m 15s
5. Post-Brexit Borders	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	36m 45s
6. Post-Brexit Immigration	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		46m
7. Brexit and Scotland			✓							✓	45s
8. Intelligence Committee and Russia Report			✓	✓							11m 30s
9. EU, Brexit and Covid-19			✓		✓	✓					7m 45s
10. Member States and the EU	✓		✓		✓	✓					12m
11. Launch of Post-Brexit Information Campaign	✓										14m 45s

The next section takes each of these themes in turn and subjects them to a more detailed analysis, in particular looking at how fairly guest contributions were balanced across the surveyed programmes.

### 3.1. Britain's First Post-Brexit Sanctions

On 6 July, it was reported that Britain would, for the first time, impose sanctions independently of the EU on dozens of individuals accused of human rights abuses around the world. The story was carried by five of the ten monitored programmes and amounted for 23 minutes and 15 seconds of airtime (14% of the total Brexit/EU coverage over the eight day interval).

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Britain Imposing first post-Brexit Sanctions	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		23m 15s

Eight speakers contributed on this theme, and were as follows:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
6 July	PM	Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	54
		Bill Browder	Campaigner	Neutral/Factual	499
	Radio 4 Six O'Clock News	Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	69
	The World Tonight	Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	51
		Bill Browder	Campaigner	Neutral/Factual	44
		Liu Xiaoming	Chinese Ambassador	Neutral/Factual	92
		Tom Tugendhat	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	546
		Nathalie Tocci	Institute of Internal Affairs, Rome	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	661

The story was framed as a 'new, post-Brexit sanctions regime', but in essence this was a piece of domestic legislation, and the majority of contributions provided no direct comment on the EU or Brexit, but simply outlined or discussed the new provision itself. The same clip of the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab outlining the legislation in the Commons appeared, (in slightly varied edits), across the three Radio 4 evening news programmes. He said,

Today this government and this House sends a very clear message on behalf of the British people that those with blood on their hands, the thugs of despots, the henchmen of dictators, will not be free to waltz into this country to buy up property on the King's Road, to do their Christmas shopping in Knightsbridge or frankly, to siphon dirty money through British banks or other financial institutions.

As Mr Raab made no reference to the EU, all three of his contributions were coded as neutral.

Similarly, Bill Browder, a businessman who had lobbied the US Congress to pass the Magnitsky Act on Russian human rights violations, spoke favourably about the new measures introduced by the UK government, but his comments were not anchored within the wider debate about the newly re-established British autonomy on sanctions.

Only Conservative MP Tom Tugendhat and former EU advisor Nathalie Tocci, who were jointly interviewed on The World Tonight, discussed the new legislation in terms of it representing a break from the EU, with various questions to put to the guests about whether the UK could have significant impact acting alone, and whether the EU was too slow to move on such matters. There was some imbalance in terms of space: Pro-EU Nathalie Tocci was granted 661 words (3m 31s of airtime) compared to Tom Tugendhat's 546 words (2m 42s).

### 3.2. EU Foreign Policy

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
EU Foreign Policy			✓								15s

On the 6 July, Radio 4's World at One carried an interview with the Conservative MP Kevin Hollinrake, on the subject of China, Huawei and 5g. He mentioned briefly that the President of the European Union

had China for cyber-attacks on hospitals during the Covid pandemic, but Mr Hollinrake did not elaborate on his own views towards the EU or its foreign policy and his contribution was therefore coded as 'Neutral/Factual'.

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
6 July	World at One	Kevin Hollinrake	Conservative Party	Neutral/Factual	25

### 3.3. General Brexit Comment

There were five brief 'general' mentions of Brexit, carried across three of the ten surveyed programmes, and accounting for 2m 15s of airtime, or 1.4% of the total EU/Brexit coverage.

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
General Brexit Comment	✓			✓			✓				2m 15s

These included: a factual statement by an advisor to the Chinese government on Britain seeking more independence post-Brexit; comments by Guardian journalist Poly Toynbee that the Cabinet had been chosen for their Brexit credentials and were thus ill-equipped to deal with the logistical problems of the Covid pandemic; a report on nominations closing in the Liberal Democrat leadership contest, with mention of the party's previous position on Brexit; a reference to Brexit in a report which looked at popular music in 2020 becoming increasingly upbeat in the face of 'bad' news; and a short mention of 'uncomfortable' things, like the 2016 Brexit vote by former New Statesman journalist John Elledge.

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
7 July	Today	Dr Huiyao Wang	Advisor to Chinese Government	Neutral/Factual	87
8 July	PM	Poly Toynbee	Journalist, The Guardian	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	135
9 July	News at One	Liberal Democrat Chorus	Liberal Democrats	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	2
		Ed Davey	Liberal Democrats	Neutral/Factual	17
		Kieran Shudall	Musician	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	61
10 July	PM	John Elledge	Journalist	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	121

Mr Davey said in his contribution that it had been a mistake for his party to campaign solely on the 'Stop Brexit' message at the last election, but his short contribution provided nothing firm on his own position and was therefore coded as 'Neutral'.

As the table illustrates, the 'General Brexit' category was dominated by voices who believed Brexit to be a negative. In every case their perspective were left unchallenged by reporters and presenters, and there were no pro-Brexit voices to counter this perspective.

### 3.4. Post-Brexit Business and Trade

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Post-Brexit Business and Trade	✓		✓		✓					✓	6m 15s

Four of the ten surveyed programmes included reports on the theme of Post-Brexit Business and Trade. On 7 July, former Chancellor Philip Hammond warned against an ‘alarming rise’ of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Conservative Party, and made references to Britain loosening its ties with the EU. This theme was covered by Today, The World at One and Newsnight. On 10 July Jane Foley from Rabobank appeared in Today’s Business News segment and spoke about ‘confusion’, ‘fear’ and ‘worry’ with regard to Brexit.

On 13 July Today’s Newspaper Review focused on Boris Johnson’s proposals for state aid, while the Radio 4 Six O’Clock News reported that the Cabinet Office Minister, Michael Gove, had urged businesses to be ready for Britain’s departure from the EU Customs Union and Single Market. The coverage on this theme amounted to 6m 15s of feature airtime, or 3.9% of total Brexit/EU coverage.

Four contributors spoke on the theme, as detailed below.

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
7 July	Today	Philip Hammond	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	271
	World at One	Philip Hammond	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	104
10 July	Today	Jane Foley	Rabobank	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	200
13 July	Radio 4 Six O’Clock News	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	38

Although the government position outweighed anti-Brexit sentiment (413 words to 200 words), the two contributions by Philip Hammond were largely statements of fact: the UK was leaving the EU and should therefore maintain good relations with China, its second-largest trading partner. More forthright was Michael Gove, speaking in the House of Commons, whose 38-word contribution was one of the few during the survey to couch Brexit in overtly positive terms:

The actions, Mr Speaker, that we’re taking today are an important step towards readiness for the new opportunities that Brexit can bring. It is time for our new start, time for us to embrace a new global destiny.

By contrast, Jane Foley from Rabobank, speaking on the Today programme a few days previously, was given five times the space to outline a range of negatives, speaking of ‘confusion’, ‘upheaval’, ‘fear’ and ‘worry’ attributable to the Brexit negotiations.

### 3.5. Post-Brexit Borders

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Post-Brexit Borders	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	36m 45s

A number of reports on seven of the ten surveyed programmes focused on the issue of Post-Brexit borders, including plans for Northern Ireland; a leaked memo from the International Trade Secretary warning of the dangers of delaying full border checks; a warning from the European Commission that Britons would lose the right to use a British driving licence or take pets when visiting the EU; and a government announcement that £700m would be spent on the UK's border systems in preparation for the end of the Brexit transition period. This theme accounted for 36m 45s in total or 23% of the total EU/Brexit airtime.

17 guest speakers contributed to reports on this theme:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
8 July	Newsnight	Steve Baker	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	66
		Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	37
9 July	Newsnight	Aodhán Connolly	Northern Ireland Retail Consortium	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	130
		Peter MacSweeney	Joint Customs Consultative Committee	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	120
		Peter Bone	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	514
		Hilary Benn	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	982
12 July	News at One	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	78
		Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	49
		Micheal Martin	Irish Prime Minister	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	49
	News at Six	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	78
		Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	49
	Radio 4 Six O'Clock News	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	43
		Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	47
	News at Ten	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	78
		Rachel Reeves	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	49
13 July	Today	Damian Green	Conservative Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	482
		Daniella dos Santos	British Veterinary Association	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	494

As the table shows, those speaking raising negative points about post-Brexit borders were given significantly more space (2,451 words) than those making positive points or defending the government position (894 words).

### 3.6. Post-Brexit Immigration

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Post-Brexit Immigration	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		46m

This was the most widely covered theme, with 46 minutes of coverage or 28% of total EU/Brexit airtime. Eight of the ten surveyed programmes carried items on the issue. On 9 July Today reported that health and social care organisations had written to Boris Johnson to warn him that severe staff shortages in the sector would get worse; on 13 July, all programme except Newsround and Newsnight carried coverage of plans for the post-Brexit immigration system outlined by the Home Secretary Priti Patel.

23 speakers contributed to the coverage:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
9 July	Today	Danny Mortimer	Cavandish Coalition	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	435
13 July	Today	Professor Alan Manning	LSE	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	673
	The World at One	Dr Peter Walsh	Migration Observatory Oxford	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	459
		Joyce Pinfield	National Care Association	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	329
	PM	Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	133
		Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	62
		Richard Tice	Brexit Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	668
	Radio 4 Six O'Clock News	Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	73
		Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	34
		Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	39
		Joyce Pinfield	National Care Association	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	51
	News at Six	Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	47
		Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	34
		Kevin Foster	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	33
		Professor Brian Bell	UK Migration Advisory Committee	Neutral/Factual	47
	News at Ten	Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	47
		Nick Thomas-Symonds	Labour Party	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	34
		Kevin Foster	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	33
		Professor Brian Bell	UK Migration Advisory Committee	Neutral/Factual	47
	The World Tonight	Raj Sehgal	Care Home Manager	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	61
		Priti Patel	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	74
		Caroline Abrahams	Age UK	Anti-Brexit/Pro-EU	111
		Philip Dunne	Conservative Party	Pro-Brexit/Anti-EU	455

The theme saw a clear bias towards those who opposed the government's immigration proposals (2,416 words) compared with those who spoke in favour of the legislation (1,469). The discussion of immigration was significant in that it included an interview with a firm supporter of Britain leaving the EU, the Brexit Party's Richard Tice, but it was notable that none of his comments were picked up and reused in any of the later programmes. By contrast, comments made by care home manager Raj Sehgal, who said the



measures announced by Priti Patel were ‘outrageous’ and ‘damaging’ had his words amplified through repetition across four of the BBC’s flagship news programmes on 13 July.

### 3.7. Brexit and Scotland

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Brexit and Scotland			✓							✓	45s

The survey carried two short sequences that mentioned Brexit in the context of Scottish independence. The 9 July edition of Newsnight asked what effect First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s leadership during the Covid crisis had had on Scotland’s appetite for independence. Correspondent Alan Little noted, ‘Scotland doesn’t want to walk the Brexit path either, but will have to, as part of the United Kingdom.’ The following day, on The World at One, Pamela Nash, former Labour MP, speaking on behalf of Scotland in the Union noted briefly that support for Scottish independence had increased after the Brexit vote in 2016, but had fallen back soon after.

Ms Nash was the only speaker on this theme during the survey interval, and her comment was coded as Neutral/Factual.

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
10 July	The World at One	Pamela Nash	Scotland in the Union	Neutral/Factual	67

### 3.8. Intelligence Committee and Russia Report into interference in UK politics, including the 2016 referendum

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Intelligence Committee and Russia Report			✓	✓							11m 30s

On 10 July it was reported that Number 10 had approved a list of Tory MPs to serve on the House of Commons cross-party Intelligence Committee, including former Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, who was being tipped to be its chair. Reporting of the story on The World at One and PM included a Brexit component – namely that the appointment of the committee might mean the publication of a delayed report into Russian interference in the UK electoral process, including the 2016 referendum. Today also reported on the story, however there was no overt reference to the referendum in its coverage.

The theme accounted for 11m 30s of coverage, or 7% of the total EU/Brexit airtime across the ten programmes.

Four speakers contributed to the discussion:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
10 July	The World at One	Dominic Grieve	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	79
		Sir Malcolm Rifkind	Conservative Party	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	682
	PM	Chris Grayling	Conservative Party	Anti-EU/Pro-Brexit	120
		Lord Ricketts	Crossbench Peer	Pro-EU/Anti-Brexit	668

Three of the four speakers were former Remainers, evidently keen to see the Russia report published and criticising its delay. This selection of guests served to bolster the long-established narrative that the Leave campaign in 2016 had been successful as a result of external interference, as opposed to the harnessing of widespread public antipathy towards the EU and its institutions. A second thrust of the coverage was that Chris Grayling himself was not suitable for the role, with Malcolm Rifkind suggesting that Mr Grayling lacked experience in the area of intelligence and security, and Lord Ricketts arguing that Mr Grayling lacked the reputation and authority for the role.

Even the inclusion of Mr Grayling himself offered no counterbalance – his appearance was in the form of an edited montage, reminding listeners of previous controversies and perceived failures. He was heard apologising for disruption on the railways, regretting that the government had been taken to court over the issue of the procurement of drugs in the event of a no-deal Brexit, and attempting to justify a decision to award a no-deal Brexit contract to a company with no ships or track record as a cross-channel operator.

Thus, there was no one to speak in favour of Mr Grayling, to contest the narrative that the delay in the publication of the Russia report had a political motive, or to challenge the subtext that there had been Russian interference in the 2016 referendum, thus delegitimising the result.

As it transpired, Mr Grayling was not appointed Chair of the Committee, with Conservative MP Julian Lewis elected in his place on 15 July. The Russia report, when published on 21 July, found that there had been attempted Russian interference in the Scottish independence vote in 2014, but said there was no evidence that Russia had targeted the Brexit referendum.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/07/20/russia-report-kremlin-tried-meddle-scottish-independence-vote/>

### 3.9. EU, Brexit and Covid-19

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
EU, Brexit and Covid-19			✓		✓	✓					7m 45s

Although the Covid-19 pandemic dominated the wider news agenda, relatively little time was spent addressing the theme from an EU perspective. The only items on this theme both appeared on 10 July, first, news that the government was planning to reject joining an EU-wide scheme aiming to secure supplies of potential coronavirus vaccines. Second, that the German Health Minister Jens Spahn had called for a Europe-wide response to the pandemic. In total, this theme was allotted 7m 45s of airtime, or 5% of the total EU/Brexit coverage.

Two guests contributed to stories on the theme:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
10 July	World at One	David Salisbury	Chatham House	Neutral/Factual	545
	Radio 4 Six O'Clock News	Jens Spahn	German Health Minister	Pro-EU	72

In his introduction to the interview with David Salisbury from Chatham House, Mark Mardell said the EU coronavirus vaccine scheme, 'plans to use the EU's economic clout to negotiate a good deal with companies trying to make a vaccine', with the clear subtext that Britain acting alone would not have this same 'economic clout.' David Salisbury contested this perspective to an extent, pointing out that if pharmaceutical manufacturers took the position of setting a fixed price then it would not matter if a country was in a consortium or not. He noted that vaccine orders were volume dependent then it would make sense to order within a consortium, but if flexibility was a priority then it would be better 'going on your own.' However, Mr Salisbury gave no overt preference as to Britain joining the EU scheme and was therefore coded as Neutral. Indeed, he suggested that the issue of whether the UK should join the EU scheme was no hugely important, and he focused heavily on the issue of vaccine access for poorer countries.

On the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News a report on the lifting of travel quarantine restrictions featured a short soundbite from the German Health Minister, Jens Spahn who, with Germany holding the EU Presidency, had called for 'a Europe-wide response' to the pandemic.

### 3.10. Member States and the EU

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Member States and the EU	✓		✓		✓	✓					12m

The Polish presidential election was discussed in the context of the country's relationship with the European Union on four of the ten programmes, with 12 min of coverage in total, or 7% of total EU/Brexit coverage. The contest was closest since the fall of Communism, with Andrzej Duda of the Law and Justice (PiS) party winning re-election over his pro-EU rival Rafał Trzaskowski by 51.2% to 48.8%. There were suggestions in the media more widely that Mr Duda's re-election would intensify Poland's stand-off with Brussels, over the his party's pursuit of changes to judiciary and media, which the European Commission had said 'subvert democratic norms.'<sup>33</sup> Sarah Montague, presenting The World at One noted that the vote suggested that closeness of the vote 'suggests a polarised society.'

Three guests contributed to discussions on the theme:

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
13 July	The World at One	Anita Prazmowska	LSE	Pro-EU	387
	The World Tonight	Radoslaw Fogiel	Polish Law and Justice Party	Anti-EU	199
		Sophie in 't Veld	Dutch MEP	Pro-EU	406

As the table shows, comment from Radoslaw Fogiel (199 words) was heavily outweighed by two critics of the Polish Law and Justice Party, who were allotted four times the space (793 words), and were therefore able to voice their concerns in much greater detail.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.11. Government's Brexit Information Campaign

Theme	Today	Newsround	World at One	PM	R4 6pm	World Tonight	News at One	News at Six	News at Ten	Newsnight	Airtime
Launch of Post-Brexit Information Campaign	✓										14m 45s

On the morning of 13 July, the government launched a campaign encouraging businesses and the public to prepare for the changes ahead as the UK moved out of its Brexit transition period, entitled 'The UK's New Start, Let's get Going'. It is notable that this story was only covered by Today – none of the other

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/13/andrzej-dudas-re-election-set-to-intensify-poland-eu-tensions>

<sup>34</sup> In addition, the report on The World Tonight featured short comments from Andrzej Duda (51 words) and LGBT activist Bart Staszewski (78 words) although neither contributor has been included in the totals for the survey, as the section in which they appeared focused on domestic Polish matters, rather than on the country's relationship with the European Union.

programmes made any reference to the information campaign, focusing instead on specific policy announcements including a new points-based immigration system and its implication for healthcare as detailed above.

Date	Programme	Name	Party/Organisation	Position on EU/Brexit	Words
13 July	Today	Damian Green	Conservative Party	Anti-Brexit	57
		Government Advertisement	Advertisement	Pro-Brexit	71
		Kate Lester	Diamond Logistics	Anti-Brexit	477
		James Greenham	EMS Physio	Neutral	264

The government advertisement consisted of a montage of voices that were positive about Brexit. For the purposes of the survey they have been categorised as a single contribution.<sup>35</sup> This brief excerpt was outweighed by the combined contributions of Damian Green, who warned of post-Brexit ‘chaos on the motorways’ and Kate Lester from Diamond logistics who said that Brexit had reduced opportunities for her company and would result in increased paperwork. Ms Lester was interviewed alongside another business owner, James Greenham, who said that his company already exports outside the EU and so were familiar with the forms and regulations that might be required once the transition period had ended. As such, the counterweight to Ms Lester’s firm criticism of Brexit was a contributor who appeared largely neutral on the matter.

### 3.1 Conclusion

Of the 11 EU/Brexit themes identified during the survey, two (EU Foreign Policy; Brexit and Scotland) featured only speakers who offered a neutral or factual perspective. One subject (Post-Brexit Business and Trade) saw a weighting towards the pro-Brexit government position. However, eight themes (Post-Brexit Sanctions; General Brexit Comment; Post-Brexit Borders; Post-Brexit Immigration; The Intelligence Committee and the Russia Report; Brexit and Covid-19; Member States and the EU; the Launch of Post-Brexit Information Campaign) there was a bias – often substantial – towards those who opposed Brexit, supported the EU or outlined a viewpoint which bolstered one of these positions. These imbalances are considered in detail in the next section.

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<sup>35</sup> Similarly, a chorus of around 20 Liberal Democrats shouting ‘Stop Brexit’ were counted as a single speaker when they appeared on BBC News at One on 9 July.

# PART THREE: DETAILED TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

This section is a more detailed analysis of the main points of bias, and broadly follows the topic order in 3.1-3.11 above. Some, but not all, of the main points are summarised in Part One..

## **Britain's first post-Brexit sanctions**

This category of coverage considered the introduction by the government of new domestic legislation on July 6 which created a 'blacklist' of overseas figures who had seriously abused human rights and would be in future be subject to sanctions including being stopped from entering the UK, profiting from the UK economy or channelling money through British banks. A clip of foreign secretary Dominic Raab outlining the new legislation to the Commons was used on PM, the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News and the World Tonight. He said: 'As we forge a dynamic new vision for a truly global Britain, this government is absolutely committed to the United Kingdom being an even stronger force for good in the world.'

The linked bulletin items made no direct reference to the EU or Brexit, and were aimed at outlining the basics of the new provisions. Most of the on-air correspondent input about the list came from diplomatic correspondent James Landale, who explained that was the UK's first unilateral step in this terrain after years of acting in concert with the EU. He commented that all sides in the Commons had welcomed the initiative, with the only rider that some wanted the government to be firmer on China. On PM, there was also an interview with Bill Browder, who had campaigned in the US for the introduction of similar legislation, and had influenced Mr Raab in the framing of the UK law. All this was neutral in tone, but later parts of the coverage explored other territory more negatively.

On the BBC1 News at Ten, correspondent James Robbins, discussing the new measures, described the UK as a 'post imperial power' and suggested that its battle with China – now 'a dominant power' – over human rights in Hong Kong would be an indicator of how effective the UK actually was. After noting that the blacklist included 20 individuals from Saudi Arabia, he said he had asked Mr Raab if the new list risked jobs in arms trade with Saudi Arabia. The foreign secretary had responded that it was more important that the UK stood up to thugs and despots.

The purpose of Mr Robbins commentary appeared to be to suggest that Britain, with diminished foreign affairs influence, faced tough obstacles in pursuing such sanctions, and that economic damage could be a consequence.

In the longest item about the Raab sanctions, on The World Tonight, presenter Ritulah Shah, sought to explore whether it would have been better and more effective if the UK, rather than going it alone with such legislation, continued to fight human rights abuses in concert with the EU.

The interviewees were Tom Tugendhat<sup>36</sup>, chair of the Commons foreign affairs select committee, and Nathalie Tocci, of the strongly pro-EU Institute of Internal Affairs in Rome, who believed that in the process of Brexit, the UK had learned a ‘terrible lesson’ which had caused anti-EU factions in other countries to abandon the idea of leaving the EU.<sup>37</sup>

The sequence involving Ms Tocci and Mr Tugendhat was preceded by a brief interview (92 words) with Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese ambassador in London, who asserted that the UK – in the context of the new legislation and the government decision to ban Huawei from being part of 5G development in the UK – was caving to foreign pressures (from the US) and was not independent.

Ms Tocci argued that imposing sanctions was not the effective way forward, that the UK could not act effectively alone on matters such as human rights, that ‘size mattered’, and that the new policy would have very little impact. She had 661 words to make her case, against 546 for Mr Tugendhat, and faced mildly adversarial questions about whether the EU itself was divided in the pursuit of such policies, which she had plenty of space to rebut.

Mr Tugendhat made it clear that he disagreed with Ms Tocci and asserted the policy would be successful; that the UK had sufficient international clout to make it so because of the global importance of London; that it was now more important for the UK to be aligned with powers such as the United States and Australia; and that the UK had bilateral arrangements with EU countries such as France which had nothing to do with the EU. He further alleged that that the EU’s foreign policy in this arena had failed over 40 years, and that the EU’s position on China was hopelessly divided.

Thus, Mr Tugendhat made important points about the new policy, and had the opportunity to say the new post-Brexit unilateral approach would be effective, and more so if it was conducted with other countries who were less divided than the EU.

But the overall programme framework in which he made these points was constructed editorially to raise strong doubts about whether the solo British initiative would work, with more said against than in favour. Mr Tugendhat was alone in his stance. There was no attempt in any of the output elsewhere to redress this imbalance, or to explore how, in other contexts, a British championing of the fight against flagrant human rights abuses might have impact and traction.

The coverage in this section did not amount to a glaring imbalance, but was another component in the default negativity outlined in the ensuing sections.

The New York Times, often criticised for left-wing views<sup>38</sup>, was less qualified about the new measures than the BBC.<sup>39</sup> An article described them as an indication that Britain was ‘seeking to carve out a post-

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<sup>36</sup> Tom Tugendhat is classified here as being pro-Brexit and anti-EU on the basis of what he said in this interview, though it is also the case that he voted Remain in the EU referendum and three times in favour of Theresa May’s EU Exit bill, which firm supporters of Brexit asserted would not really facilitate a full departure.

<sup>37</sup> <https://brexituk.com/brexit-european-union/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.allsides.com/news-source/new-york-times>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/world/europe/britain-human-rights-sanctions.html>

Brexit role as a human rights defender'. It added that the UK had passed the necessary legislation in 2018, but had held off designating anyone on the list until it formally left the EU. Reporter Mark Landler added:

But there was more than a hint of satisfaction in his tone. Britain had broken free from the need for consensus, which has so far prevented the 27-member bloc from agreeing to such sanctions.

He also quoted Emil Dall, an expert in sanctions at the Royal United Services Institute, a think tank in London, as saying: 'Even if they have a human rights sanctions regime in place, would they use it like the US or UK? What we often see in the EU is a lowest common denominator when it comes to sanctions'.

In a BBC website report, James Landale was more negative about the new human rights sanctions than he was on air.<sup>40</sup> He noted that the UK had always had to work in concert with the EU and said the EU was working on its own version. He also opined that sanctions were almost always more powerful if imposed collectively. He did not mention that, as the New York Times had asserted, that a failure to achieve consensus by the EU had prevented it from creating its own initiative. The line supported by Tom Tugendhat, that Britain was championing rights where the EU had allegedly failed, was thus further diluted by selective BBC comment, which, in approach and tone, was unquestionably more negative.

## **EU Foreign Policy**

This was a passing mention of possible cyber-attacks on hospitals in the EU, which, according to the EU president, had been carried out by China. The single contribution was classed as neutral.

## **General Brexit Comment**

These were six short sequences threaded through the survey period which contained casual mentions of Brexit by various contributors. Most cast the process of leaving the EU negatively, especially Guardian journalist Polly Toynbee, who asserted, unchallenged by the presenter, that most of the Cabinet had been selected for their Brexit credentials and were thus ill-equipped to deal with other matters such as the pandemic. There were no such passing remarks which were positive about Brexit.

These were a relatively minor part of the output amounting to only 2 minutes and 15 seconds, but it is striking that none of the comments about Brexit was positive, and the one from Polly Toynbee was sharply critical, associating support for Brexit with outright incompetence.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-53303100>



## **Post-Brexit business and trade**

The bulk of this section came in two sequences starting on July 7 from Philip Hammond who argued that the UK – despite the problems of human rights, which could be dealt with firmly by other means – needed to, and could, develop in the post-Brexit world a strong trading relationship with China, and warned against anti-China sentiment in his party. It is classed as ‘Pro-Brexit’ because the coverage suggested that, outside the EU, prospects could be good for the UK, but his words were not framed as an argument rooted in post-Brexit optimism; his main thrust was that a pragmatic agreement with China must be formed and trading links must not be sacrificed. Michael Gove made a straightforward statement in connection with border controls that the UK was taking an important step towards the new opportunities of Brexit.

By contrast on July 10, Jane Foley, of Rabobank, the only other programme contributor in this category who was invited to weigh up post Brexit trading prospects, was strongly negative and couched her answer in terms of upheaval, fear, confusion and worry. This, at 200 words, was the longest direct assessment of trade prospects, and projected almost identical concerns expressed by Ms Foley in the News-watch survey of Today business news<sup>41</sup> covering the six months after the EU referendum, when she also warned of upheavals and capital flight from the UK.

## **Post-Brexit Borders/ The Government Launch of its ‘UK’s New Start – Let’s Get Going’ Information Campaign<sup>42</sup>**

The 17 contributions listed in 3.5 above included four 50-word summary points each from Michael Gove and his Labour counterpart, Rachel Reeves; a parliamentary question asking about future border arrangements and related trade by the Conservative MP Steve Baker; a response to him from Boris Johnson; six from figures who opposed the government strategy towards Brexit, or who had reservations about such policy. They were Hilary Benn, chair of the Commons Brexit committee; Aodhán Connolly, of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium; Peter MacSwinney, formerly a member of the government’s joint customs consultative committee; Micheál Martin, the Irish prime minister; Daniella dos Santos, of the British Veterinary Association; and Damian Green MP.

There was only one substantial contribution from someone in favour of Brexit. That was the Conservative MP Peter Bone. He asserted that the steps being taken towards it were adequate. Discounting the contributions from Michael Gove and Rachel Reeves, which broadly balanced each other out, the six contributors who expressed specific reservations about Brexit arrangements spoke 2,259 words about their concerns, Peter Bone spoke only 514. Such numerical discrepancies do not add up in themselves to

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<sup>41</sup> <https://news-watch.co.uk/business-news-2016-survey/>

<sup>42</sup> These two categories from Part 2, Section three are taken together because they overlapped in content terms.

bias, but here it shows that the various news programmes made more strenuous efforts to include opinion from those who wanted to attack the government's approach.

Damian Green MP is classified as 'anti-Brexit' for several reasons. Mr Green is, of course, part of a governing party pledged to ensuring Brexit finally happens. On the Today programme, he said he was simply speaking on behalf of his constituents in opposing the siting of a large new lorry park – as a staging post towards Dover customs – in his Ashford constituency. But during the referendum and beyond, he was first a staunch Remainer and then at best lukewarm about Brexit happening. In this interview, his main aim was to highlight the potential problems with customs which had not been resolved, and so he was not 'neutral' about the topic and posited yet again in this exchange that he feared the process of leaving the EU could be a big problem with regard to new digital border controls which he contended were untested. Although he also said he hoped that things would go smoothly in terms of the handling of lorries, overall, he was clearly still very wary about Brexit, a point which is further confirmed by his decision to vote against the government's internal market bill on September 14.<sup>43</sup>

Coverage of this topic was divided in programme into two distinct phases. The first, starting on July 8 and amplified on July 9, was hinged on coverage by Newsnight of a 'leaked' letter from Liz Truss which – the programme claimed – showed that in her role as international trade secretary, she had warned Rishi Sunak and Michael Grove, that she had deep fears that preparedness for the end of the transition period in terms of customs control was potentially inadequate, and that departure from the EU could lead to serious problems with the Northern Ireland border and fall foul of WTO rules.

The second starting on July 12 and running over to the following day – still framed in reference to the leaked letter – referred to the government's announcement about £1.5bn of spending on new border control measures as well as the release of government information (3.11) about how border control would differ at the EU interfaces when the transition period ended. This was used editorially as a peg to explore the difficulties which would ensue, including problems over health insurance, the movement of pets and telephone roaming charges.

The main articulation of these problems was by BBC correspondents who detailed the need for more than 400 million new customs forms, the ending eligibility for the EU's EHIC health insurance card, and the introduction of much more stringent pet health checks, especially in regard to rabies.

Peter Bone, the Conservative MP known for his strongly pro-Brexit views, was interviewed on Newsnight on July 9 in his capacity as a member of the Commons Brexit select committee, alongside Hilary Benn, the prominent Labour Remainer and chair of the Brexit committee.

The set-up for the item was that Emma Barnett spelled out that the EU had warned that there would be tough new border checks for Britons entering the EU, including 'strenuous' new regulations covering pets, health insurance, and driving licences. Nick Watt, in his analysis, warned that borders would be 'harder',

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/brexit-internal-market-bill-vote-a4547866.html>

come what may, and would include 'customs formalities' on all goods (with or without a trade deal) and repeated that Liz Truss had warned in her letter to Rishi Sunak and Michael Gove about problems with Northern Ireland customs checks, as well as smuggling and possible intervention by the WTO to enforce their own regulations. Mr Watt suggested that the government was taking a relaxed approach to the leaked letter, but also that the government had possibly 'taken a swipe' at Ms Truss by suggesting the UK was 'WTO compliant'.

The sequence contained brief contributions from Aodhán Connolly, of the Northern Ireland Trade Federation, who claimed the new customs arrangements would make it impossible to conduct business transactions because of cashflow issues and predicted bankruptcies; and from Peter McSwiney, a government advisor on trade issues, who claimed that businesses had not been consulted about the new arrangements, and that what was being provided at borders and in terms of information was too little, too late.

In the interview which followed, Mr Benn, for his part, said he was least concerned about the WTO because it would take six months to go through the dispute resolution process. The bigger issue, as he noted was said in the Newsnight report, was that the UK was not ready and it was not entirely clear what we needed to be ready for. Goods needed to be checked when they came into the UK and facilities had not yet been built for that. Also, with outward goods, businesses would have to pay for paperwork they did not have at the moment, something which was the last they needed because of coronavirus. The government was also waiting for an IT application, a vehicle movement service, and it had not yet been built. Businesses were saying with only five months to go, 'for goodness sake, what are we planning for?' The border plan was needed 'very urgently indeed'. He repeated these points towards the end, while at the same time agreeing with Mr Bone that intelligence rather than 'peaked caps' was the solution to smuggling.

The main thrust of presenter Emma Barnett's questioning of Mr Bone was to ask in different ways if the leak of the Liz Truss letter about customs arrangements was embarrassing in that it showed that preparations were inadequate.

Mr Bone asserted that talks were proceeding well and were likely to result in an agreement with the EU, giving a comprehensive free trade deal. He asserted that the Brexit committee had heard evidence that WTO issues would not be a problem, especially if there was a free trade deal. Against Ms Barnett's persistent mentions of the leaked letter, Mr Bone said he would not comment on it unless she could provide a copy (she did not). Mr Bone said he believed everything that was required could be done in time to meet the departure deadline and that Dover had already said it was 'completely relaxed', along with independent customs experts. He added that businesses would be told what the government plans entailed the following week. Mr Bone claimed plans were going well and did not see the need for 'gloom and doom'.

Overall, the editorial set-up in which Mr Bone appeared was designed to emphasise that as a result of departure from the EU, borders would be considerably 'harder', that there were be onerous new customs formalities, that businesses faced possible ruin because of cash-flow problems and that overall planning had been too late, slipshod and inadequate. Mr Bone took most of these points head-on, asserted that the alleged problems were variously exaggerated or non-existent, or being properly planned for.

Yet again, the pro-Brexit perspective was presented solely by a Conservative politician.

The second part of coverage began on Sunday, July 12, with mentions of the expected announcement of a government £700m package to ensure borders worked effectively after the end of the transition period. In this phase, there were no interviews, but a series of film and voice reports from BBC correspondents, illustrated with a few outside clips.

In the BBC1 News at One, a package by Nick Eardley focused again on the concerns allegedly contained in the Liz Truss 'leaked' letter and Labour's assertion that the measures were too little, too late. Mr Eardley stressed that Michael Gove had not clarified when the new ports infrastructure would be ready or whether there would be enough personnel 'to ensure safety'. He noted that the Irish prime minister had also criticised the UK government over being 'slow'. The report on World this Weekend ran over similar points and said that Michael Gove had 'defended' his preparations against the claims he was being too slow. In the BBC1 Evening News, Iain Watson broadened out the reporting through a new focus on the likely problems which would be faced by Britons entering EU countries. He asserted that a 'friction free' border would no longer be possible and that the new provisions and procedures – which were needed to avoid 'a cliff-edge' - were not likely to be operational on time. He repeated the warnings about borders in the Liz Truss letter. The same concerns and emphasis on the dangers of Brexit were contained in the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News.

In the evening bulletins, Iain Watson further ramped up Brexit-related concerns. He said that as part of the preparations for Brexit, traders would be given a 'hefty' 100-page guide to new customs rules and asserted that spending would run to hundreds of millions of pounds but the infrastructure would not be ready on time. He again repeated the concerns of unreadiness allegedly expressed in the Liz Truss letter and stressed that even if there was a trade deal with the EU, new customs checks would be necessary. He reminded viewers that the Brexit vote had been four years ago, and stressed that Labour was stating that the government was being too slow. He added that on the next day, home secretary Priti Patel would also outline new restrictions on legal immigration, also leading to 'big changes' at the borders. He concluded with the judgment that it 'would feel as if Brexit has arrived'.

On July 13, the problems of Brexit were stressed even further. Bulletins on Today at 6am led with an item which outlined that government advice to travellers was to check their passports and take out comprehensive health insurance. Iain Watson again mentioned the 100-page customs advice document, said the UK could no longer rely on the EU health scheme provisions, that new mobile phone roaming charges would apply. It was also reported that new immigration rules would end free movement and

make the skilled worker entry system more complex. It was noted that Labour had warned the new system would negatively impact the health service and social care. In the 8am version, in a clip from an interview on the programme, Remain supporter Damian Green warned that it was vital that chaos was avoided. At 6.32am in an opinion piece, Norman Smith amplified the warnings in the bulletins by stating that post-Brexit arrangement would mean 'more costs across the board' (in relation to crossing borders) and a 'bundle of paperwork'. He spelled out that the areas affected would include passports, driving licences, health insurance, 'tinty' things on car headlights, mobile phone roaming charges and regulations affecting pets, which would now take up to four months to obtain clearance. Mr Smith warned that if the UK ended up trading on WTO terms there would be 'an awful lot more' of requirements placed on businesses. Including the need for 400 million more customs forms.

He noted at the end, in passing, that the government had said there would be new trading opportunities, and had signed 19 trade deals, but stressed these were 'not with big-hitters'.

A report at 6.53am, as has already been noted, explored with MP Damian Green the potential for lorry-park chaos at Dover. Mr Green said that in efforts to cope with this, the wrong site for a lorry park in Ashford had been chosen. Presenter Justin Webb emphasised that people were getting what they had voted for (Brexit), and that the planning involved was unsatisfactory because it had been known for years that the UK was leaving the EU.

At 8.20am, Justin Webb and Laura Kuenssberg discussed further the problems of Brexit which had already been highlighted, including the ending of EU health insurance, difficulties with pets, the introduction of telephone roaming charges and all the issues highlighted in the Liz Truss letter. Ms Kuenssberg suggested that the missive showed the government was not ready for the changes and added that time was tight to achieve a trade deal.

In the final Today item on Brexit, Nick Robinson reminded the audience of the problems raised by Norman Smith about pets and interviewed Daniella do Santos of the British Veterinary Association about the likely delays in getting approval to take pets abroad, and the need in some cases for anti-rabies injections. She spoke 494 words and highlighted the complexities involved, especially with rabies clearance, which, she emphasised, would take several months.

On the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News, on border controls, it was said the government had acknowledged that there would be greater friction at UK borders, regardless of the outcome of EU-UK trade talks. There was then a 'reality check' from Chris Morris, who predicted 400 million extra customs forms, barriers to firms selling financial services and restrictions on crossing the Channel, including health care issues, passport validity problems, and restrictions on pets, plus the new need for visas. He asserted that the 26 EU countries only had problems with one country, the UK, whereas now the UK had problems with 26 countries. Mr Morris also foresaw multiple problems on the Irish border and said the infrastructure changes at ports would not be ready on time.

Two contributions on July 13 related specifically to the government announcement about border arrangements. At 7.34am, Nick Robinson suggested that he was about to discuss borders in terms of the 'costs and opportunities' of Brexit, but the item was mainly about the problems. Kate Lester of transport company Diamond Logistics said the form-filling burden on businesses would mushroom from 50 million to 250 million, with the need for an extra 50,000 related staff. When asked, she said Brexit was reducing opportunity rather than creating more. James Greenham, of EMS Physio, although already an exporter to non-EU countries, simply said that he was already exporting goods worldwide, and asserted that the changes would not affect him.

Overall, reporting of these potential post-Brexit border problems and the government announcement was biased on two main counts: the inclusion of only one contributor who put the pro-Brexit, pro-government case, against six (the combination of 3.5 and 3.11) who foresaw very significant difficulties; and the overwhelming negativity of the correspondent reports which formed the bulk of the coverage of the government announcement of financial measures to assist with post-Brexit border issues.

Further, the contributors who were concerned about the Brexit arrangements contained a breadth of opinion covering and MP, business leaders, political opinion from outside the UK, and a senior vet; the only opinion ranged against this was from the Conservative MP Peter Bone.

In other respects, too, from the outset, coverage was pitched negatively against Brexit. The Liz Truss letter clearly raised issues of preparedness, but there was no effort to explore whether this was the sort of letter which a government minister would routinely send to her superiors as part of her responsibilities. Rather, it was taken only as an indication of alarm and that serious problems were in store. Those difficulties were amplified in the subsequent coverage both by repetition of that a warning letter had been sent, and by the inclusion of programme contributors who concurred that alarm was appropriate.

Against that background, BBC correspondents from July 12 ramped up the potential post-Brexit border issues to almost fever pitch. Their reports, across almost all news programmes, mentioned cliff-edges, 'harder' borders, hefty manuals, hundreds of millions of extra forms, increased charges and inconvenience in terms of health insurance, driving, mobile phone usage, the transport across borders of pets. Their opinions amounted to a re-hash of what was dubbed 'Project Fear' during the EU referendum, the idea that life outside the EU would be intolerable. Peter Bone was the only voice ranged against the onslaught.

## **Post-Brexit Immigration**

This amounted to 46 minutes, 28 per cent of the total EU-related airtime.

Coverage in this section, mainly on July 13, was hinged on the announcement by the government of a new points system to regulate immigration, which had been flagged as a key part of government strategy under the administration of Boris Johnson.

Overwhelmingly, items focused not on immigration as a whole, or in economic terms, but on the impact of the new measures on the country's care system – whether it would hamper recruitment negatively in the social care sector, and to a lesser extent, the NHS.

There were 23 separate contributions. Of these, in support of the measures, there were interviews of 671 words with Brexit party chairman Richard Tice, and government minister Phillip Dune (455 words); and short clips from home secretary Priti Patel (3), and government minister Kevin Foster (2).

Ranged against them were 13 contributions. Four were in interviews totalling 1,890 words, from Danny Mortimer of the Cavendish Coalition, Professor Alan Manning of the LSE, Dr Peter Walsh from the Oxford Migration Observatory, and Joyce Pinfield of the National Care Association. The shorter ones – all of less than 65 words – were from Labour party spokesman Nick Thomas-Symonds (4), care home manager Raj Sehgal (4) and Joyce Pinfield.

The first mention of the new measures was in the evening bulletins of July 12. Iain Watson, in the item described above which was primarily about border control issues, said that the following day home secretary Priti Patel would outline new restrictions on legal immigration, also leading to 'big changes' at the borders. At the end he said that it 'would feel as if Brexit had arrived'.

On July 13, reporter Tom Symonds on Today bulletins reported that new immigration rules would end free movement and make the skilled worker entry system more complex. He noted that Labour had warned the new system would negatively impact the health service and social care. At 6.35am, Mr Symonds reported that those running care homes were particularly concerned about the new immigration system because the government was trying to stop 'cheap labour' entering the UK.

At 7.09am, Alan Manning, former chair of the Migratory Advisory Committee, said there would be serious manning problems in the social care sector because workers were paid too little to qualify for entry under the new points system. He asserted that there were plenty of people who could fill the vacancies, but they would not because they would not accept the pay levels. He wanted pay increased immediately.

On World at One, Dominic Casciani outlined the main points of the new immigration system, and noted that Priti Patel had claimed it would attract 'the brightest and best' skilled workers to UK jobs. He added that Downing Street had confirmed that, because of low pay, foreign social care workers would not qualify for a new visa which would apply to skilled jobs in the health sector, and that instead that local councils would be allocated an extra £1.5 billion to fund the social care sector. In an interview with Peter Walsh of the Migration Observatory, Sarah Montague noted that free movement of EU nationals would cease at the end of the year. Mr Walsh outlined that those earning less than £25,600 would not qualify

for entry under the new immigration rules, He added that that the hospitality sector would be 'bitterly disappointed', and though there was a social care visa, most care workers from overseas would not qualify because they were paid too little. Ms Montague suggested the government hope was that British workers would fill the jobs. Mr Walsh said it was not clear this would happen. Joyce Pinfield, a care home owner and representative on the board of the National Care Association, said she was disappointed with the new rules and claimed that the needs of the social care system had not been taken into account. She added that only new managers might qualify and that 122,000 vacancies would now remain unfilled.

BBC1 News at One carried an outline report by Tom Symonds of changes to immigration.

On PM, the bulletin said that care home workers had been excluded from the new immigration scheme, with the government saying that British people could apply for the jobs. In response, 'care home leaders' had said the expectation was 'unrealistic' and unions that most cleaners, porters and support staff would not qualify for entry. Dominic Casciani reported that Downing Street had confirmed that foreign social workers report would not be allowed to apply for jobs under the new health sector entry visa because their pay was too low, but that the sector would be helped by an extra £1.5 billion in funding.

Evan Davis then included in his introduction to an interview with Brexit Party chairman Richard Tice, clips from Priti Patel outlining the new points system, and from Nick Thomas-Symonds, the shadow home secretary, who said he was shocked that the government did not consider social care staff to be skilled workers and that they would thus be excluded from qualifying for entry under the new health service visa. In the introduction, Mr Davis said the new immigration rules would not allow into the UK migrant carers, unless their pay was boosted sharply.

Mr Tice asserted first that he thought the new immigration system was an improvement because its focus was bringing in to the UK the brightest and best workers from around the world while at the same time stopping 'the race to the bottom' to bring in unskilled or low-skilled workers from outside the UK when Britons were looking for jobs. Mr Davis suggested he was saying that he favoured unskilled jobs for British workers and deskilling the British worker by getting them to do jobs instead of foreigners. Mr Tice said that was not the case The situation would revert to pre-2004 in the way the market worked. There would be an imperative to raise the price to attract labour, or invest in capital equipment to replace labour. He asserted:

That's what always used to happen for about 150 years. If you have an unlimited supply of low skilled labour then the price of that labour will either stay the same or go down. What will now happen, and this is actually a huge positive for the care sector, is that wages for care workers, quite rightly, need to be increased quite considerably.

He added that his daughter was working as a fruit picker, and currently, it suited farmers to attract workers from Eastern Europe and in effect to get their costs back by charging for them to stay in mobile accommodation provided by the farmer. Mr Davis asked if he thought the key thing was that



the new system pushed wages up in low-skilled jobs, and thus attracted British workers. Mr Tice agreed. Mr Davis asked if that was the case, whether Britain was ready to pay more, and whether in the wake of Covid, that would work. Mr Tice thought it would. Mr Davis asked if he foresaw tax going up. He replied:

. . and frankly, one of the ways to help us out of this economic crisis is to have a dose of inflation, which will deflate away some of the huge debts being incurred. So, yes, inflation would be welcome. A rise in wages for low . . . you know, the lower skilled jobs would be welcome. And, you know, it's . . . it's a . . . it's a win-win, albeit at a time of, of, of tragedy and, and, and sadness when you know, hundreds of thousands of young people are going to struggle to find jobs.

Mr Davis asked if some industries which had been exporting might shut up shop because wages would go up and they would not be competitive. Mr Tice suggested it would be the complete opposite. The currency had weakened and there was now a huge opportunity for UK manufacturing PLC to actually manufacture and source and supply and develop goods here in the UK, employing people in the UK. He cited what he said was the government's 'excellent' decision to invest £500 million in the OneWeb satellite system – that was using state aid which could not have been done as members of the EU that would generate investment in technology and hopefully high-quality jobs.

On the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News, the Dominic Casciani report from earlier in the day was repeated. At the end of the sequence, a clip from Raj Seghal, a care home manager, said the sector had desperately hoped the new immigration system would facilitate the filling of the 122,000 vacancies in the sector, and added that he was outraged that there had been 'absolutely nothing' for the sector, and they now could not recruit from European countries.

Mr Casciani noted that the government claimed to be spending £1.5 billion on the care sector and had asserted that immigration was not the solution to the problems.

Correspondent Michael Buchanan then reported that there had been an angry response to the new immigration system by health organisations and unions, as well as from the head of the NHS network. Care England 'which speaks for independent providers of adult social care', it was said, had accused the government of failing to take into account the sector's specific needs, while the GMB had said the system was 'an embarrassing shambles'.

Mr Buchanan opined that few sectors of the economy 'asked so much and paid so little' - with a requirement for compassion, patience and empathy. . . 'rewarded by receiving the minimum wage'. He said 16 per cent (250,000) of care workers came from the EU or overseas. He noted that the government wanted the industry to move away from being a minimum wage employer. Doubts that this would happen were again expressed in a clip from Joyce Pinfield. Mr Buchanan concluded that the ban on care companies seeking employees from abroad would 'feel like neglect' from the government. He added:

Repeated broken promises to reform the sector, coupled with incredulity over ministerial claims that they'd put a protective ring around care homes through the pandemic has left the sector exasperated and often demoralised.

A report by Mark Easton for the BBC 1 News at Six covered similar ground. He stressed that the sector, which had been battling Covid-19, had been hoping that the new immigration rules would make it easier to recruit 'desperately needed' staff from overseas. He included again the quote from Raj Seghal, along with comment from the Labour party, to the effect that the new measures were 'insulting'.

A clip from government minister Kevin Foster was included. He argued that recruitment could be prioritised from within the UK. Mr Easton concluded that the measures might further complicate the economics of a beleaguered sector.

On The World Tonight, Ritulah Shah outlined the new immigration system and said there were concerns that the provisions excluded social care, with the government hoping UK workers would in future fill the one in six posts which were empty. Caroline Abrahams of Help the Aged said the government approach was like kicking a dog when it was down. She then interviewed former health minister Philip Dunne and first asked him whether, with 122,000 vacancies in the social care sector, it was wise to leave such workers out of the visa scheme. Mr Dunne said first that the visa scheme was a welcome development which allowed overseas workers to fill NHS vacancies. In the social care sector, the need was different, and so the goal was to provide training for find individuals motivated to work there. Ms Shah asked whether, in a sector hard hit by Covid-19, and where wages were low, that was a realistic goal. Mr Dunne said there were already some great schemes underway and it would take up to three months, but it was possible. Ms Shah asked if the policy would change if vacancies remained high. Mr Dunne replied that ways would be found of meeting the challenges.

Mr Tice's appearance on PM – the main interview with someone who supported the new government measures – thus was against a background of numerous points from both BBC staff and outside contributors that there were serious concerns about filling vacancies in the social work arena. Philip Dunne, the former health minister, was also able to spell out why he thought social care workers could be trained and recruited in the UK, against questioning from Ritulah Shah which suggested strongly that the targets might not be met.

In summary, Mr Tice was able to say that bringing in low-paid workers from abroad was a 'race to the bottom'; that the new system would incentivise British employers to train and pay properly UK workers, that bringing in cheap labour from abroad for lowly tasks was exploitative; that freeing up jobs for British labour would help young people; that the government could invest strategically outside the EU to generate new technologies and the creation of highly-paid jobs.

These were all substantial points in favour of the new immigration system which were heard only from Mr Tice and (to a limited extent) Mr Dunne, against a welter of outside contributors who thought the current system of low-paid labour from foreign workers must continue. This was major imbalance and

showed that on EU-related issues, the BBC editorial approach was simply to protect the status quo and to project plans for life outside the EU as dangerous and illogical without sufficient regard of alternative views.

Bias was compounded by the excessive and unwarranted narrow focus on the projected impact of the new measures on the social care system. The comments of Mr Tice were the only glimpse of the treatment of immigration in a wider context and the potential benefits of being outside the EU for British workers and the economy as a whole. Instead of exploring such topics, the BBC editorial intent appeared to be to suggest that the new measures were an act of deliberate government harm on the social care system. Remarks deemed newsworthy by editors by other participants in the coverage, such as those by Raj Seghal were recycled and thus re-emphasised in other programmes and bulletins, but those by Mr Tice were not, adding to the bias.

## **Brexit and Scotland**

In a discussion about Scotland on Newsnight on July 9, in which it was said that polls were showing rising support for Scottish independence, Alan Little asserted that he had been following the independence debate for 40 years since the 1978 referendum. He said that one factor had remained constant:

. . . it's this: that support for devolution, and now independence, builds when there's a perception that Westminster is imposing on Scotland policies that were rejected at the ballot box here when the popular legitimacy of Westminster rule can be called into question. One day, the pandemic and this strange way of living will be over. But Brexit will still be with us. And Scotland voted decisively against it. If, as polls suggest, the SNP win a majority at Holyrood next year will that be enough to force Boris Johnson to grant a second referendum?

He added that Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister of Scotland was insisting that the UK would not be able to disregard a clear electoral mandate. Former SNP MP George Kerevan agreed with the point and added that Ms Sturgeon's plan was to 'wear him (prime minister Boris Johnson) down'. Mr Little opined:

Is this spike in support for independents solely down to the pandemic, or is it just the latest chapter in a long, slowly unwinding story that stretches back decades? I hear today the echo of an earlier chapter in that story. In the 1980s, Scotland did not want to walk the path mapped out by Margaret Thatcher, but as part of the United Kingdom, it had to. That experience transformed the way Scotland thought about its place in the union and created a three to one solid majority in favour of creating the Scottish Parliament. And this is what makes today a sit up and pay attention moment for anyone who supports the union. Are we now in a similar place? For Scotland doesn't want to walk the Brexit path either, but will have to, as part of the United Kingdom. The question is whether that has a similarly transformative effect on the way Scotland thinks about independence.

He then posited that 'he heard the echo' of an earlier chapter in history, in which Margaret Thatcher's imposition of her agenda on Scotland had triggered the creation of a three to one majority in favour of a Scottish parliament, and then wondered if something similar was happening because of Brexit.

The danger of correspondents making such judgments is that they mistake their own prejudices for objective analysis. His subjective judgment was that Brexit had alienated the majority of Scots and was driving the pressure towards a second referendum and possibly independence. Does this stand up to scrutiny? Other commentators have different views.

A Scotsman article published on August 25, 2020 suggested a very different analysis of the sort not taken into account by Mr Little.<sup>44</sup> Ian Swanson observed that polling was 55-45 in favour of independence (a reverse of the 2014 referendum). He pointed out, though, that an alternative poll commissioned by the Scottish Fabians had found that, despite the imminence of Brexit, only 36 per cent of Scots placed independence at the top of their priorities. He added that the factors which had rejected independence in 2014, including uncertainty over the currency, worries about the future of pensions and Scotland's position in Europe if it were independent, were the key issues holding people back. He asserted:

The chance to escape from Boris Johnson's agenda and assert Scotland's own priorities is attractive to many voters. But before taking the plunge they will want to know the hard facts – positive and negative – so they can take a balanced view when they make their decision. In many ways it could be argued the independence case is now stronger than ever, but it would be a mistake for Yes supporters to assume the polls are proof the battle has been won.

Another analysis which deals specifically with Margaret Thatcher's influence over Scottish support for independence – and is very different from that of Mr Little – is contained in a paper by Polish academic Tomasz Czapiewski, entitled *The Political Myth of Margaret Thatcher in Scotland* published in the Polish Political Science Yearbook vol 45. The abstract states:

The article describes and explains the phenomenon of the political myth of Margaret Thatcher – her anti-Scottish attitude and policies and its impact on the process of decomposition of the United Kingdom. The author indicates that the view of Margaret Thatcher's dominance in Scotland is simplified, stripped of complexity, ignoring significant information conflicting with the thesis, but that also plays an important role in current politics, legitimizing secessionist demands and strengthening the identity of the Scottish community. In the contemporary Scottish debate with its unequivocal defence policy of Thatcher is outside of the discourse, proving its sanctity status. Thatcher could see this special Scottish dimension within the United Kingdom, but treated it rather as a delay in the reforms needed in the country. There are many counterarguments to the validity of the Thatcher myth. Firstly, many negative processes that took place in the 80s were not initiated by Thatcher, only accelerated. Secondly, the Tory decline in popularity in the north began before the leadership of Thatcher and has lasted long after her dismissal. The Conservative Party was permanently seen in Scotland as openly English. Thirdly, there is a lot of accuracy in the opinion that the real division is not between Scotland and England, only between southern England and the rest of the country. Widespread opinion that Thatcher was hostile to Scotland is to a large extent untruthful. She has never retreated radically from any of the Scottish privileges, such as the Barnett formula or the Scottish Development Agency.<sup>45</sup>

The conclusions are obviously debatable, but they are based on solid, clearly-stated evidence-based logic, and are at odds with the opinion of Mr Little. Mr Czapiewski says specifically that there are many

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/scottish-independence-poll-shows-record-support-its-not-bag-ian-swanson-2951454>

<sup>45</sup> [yadda.icm.edu.pl/yadda/element/pps2016007](https://yadda.icm.edu.pl/yadda/element/pps2016007)

counterarguments to the validity of the ‘Thatcher myth’ and suggests that that myth has been used by nationalists to bolster their arguments for independence. In his on-air observations, Mr Little did not provide any counterviews and also bolstered his assessment by suggesting it was a proven factor in the independence equation which had now been boosted by the deliberate ignoring of Scottish opinion about Brexit. This ignored that the referendum result was a composite of the whole of the UK and that regional variations

Mrs Thatcher was disliked and distrusted by many who supported Scottish independence or socialism, but to portray the rise of nationalism, and with it, the SNP, as having a simple root cause was simplistic and arguably overplayed the importance of Brexit in the equation.

The BBC editorial guidelines on such matters state:

**4.3.11** Presenters, reporters and correspondents are the public face and voice of the BBC – they can have a significant impact on perceptions of whether due impartiality has been achieved. Our audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output the personal opinions of our journalists or news and current affairs presenters on matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy, or on ‘controversial subjects’ in any other area. They may provide professional judgements, rooted in evidence, but may not express personal views on such matters publicly, including in any BBC-branded output or on personal blogs and social media.<sup>46</sup>

In his ‘professional judgment’ on this matter, Mr Little’s views were rooted in a skewed and controversial consideration of the triggering factors in the debate about Scottish independence, and fell outside what was permissible.

## **Commons Intelligence Committee**

Coverage of this topic on World at One and PM on July 10 was framed editorially to imply that Russian influence had been an important influence in the EU referendum. The contributors suggested that the publication of the report on the subject had been suspiciously and incompetently delayed by the government because of that.

The three programme guests interviewed on the topic were all strongly pro-EU and antagonistic to the government: Dominic Grieve, the former MP who had been chair of the intelligence committee, and was regarded as the most vociferous anti-Brexit Conservative MP; Lord Peter Ricketts, a former government security adviser and diplomat, who on January 30, told the Harvard Kennedy Centre that Brexit was a massive failure of the British political system, and that he hoped it would be reversed<sup>47</sup>; and Sir Malcolm

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/guidelines>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/impacts-brexit-uk-eu-and-world>

Rifkind, the former foreign secretary, who was a strong Remainer, and had described Brexit as ‘an accident waiting to happen’.<sup>48</sup>

The three pro-EU guests pushed without challenge that they were keen to see the Russia report published. They criticised its delay, the insinuation being that this was politically motivated and proved incompetence.

The three bolstered the long-established narrative pushed by Remainers<sup>49</sup> that the Leave campaign in 2016 had been successful as a result of external (Russian) interference, as opposed to a genuine desire by the British people for Brexit and widespread public antipathy towards the EU and its institutions.

Chris Grayling MP, the government candidate to take over as chair of the intelligence committee, was not interviewed. Some past comments by him were edited to show his incompetence in previous roles, the intent being presumably to amplify the concerns about him expressed by the other guests. Mr Grayling was heard apologising for disruption on the railways, regretting that the government had been taken to court over the issue of the procurement of drugs in the event of a no-deal Brexit, and attempting to justify a decision to award a no-deal Brexit contract to a company with no ships or track record as a cross-channel operator.

The second biased element of the coverage was that the contributors pushed hard – again without direct challenge – to project that Chris Grayling not suitable to become chairman. Malcolm Rifkind posited that he lacked experience in the area of intelligence and security, and Lord Ricketts claimed he did not have the reputation and authority to fill the role.

As it transpired, Mr Grayling was not appointed Chair of the Committee, with Conservative MP Julian Lewis elected instead on 15 July.

There was no effort to bring into the frame balancing opinion to suggest – as Nigel Farage and Aaron Banks (for example) had said all along, and was established in the actual report when it was published on July 21 – that evidence of Russian influence in the EU referendum was lacking.<sup>50</sup>

It was also said in the report that the government had not investigated the possible existence of such evidence. But in the overall treatment of this issue, this coverage did not pay sufficient regard to the pro-Brexit perspective; this for the BBC was seen editorially as chance to re-hash prominently the importance of Russian interference without regard to arguments otherwise.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.regents.ac.uk/news/public-seminar-brexit-an-accident-waiting-to-happen-says-sir-malcolm-rifkind>.

<sup>49</sup> Typified here: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/11/14/the-extent-of-russian-backed-fraud-means-the-referendum-is-invalid/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2020/07/21/farage-some-serious-apologies-due-russia-report-reveals-no-brexit-interference/>

## EU-wide Vaccination Scheme

As the table at 2.3.9 shows, there were only two outside contributors in this area of coverage, which consisted of items on Radio 4 World at One and the Six O'Clock News on July 10, adding up to almost eight minutes of airtime. There was a lack of balance in what the contributors asserted, in the editorial framing of the relevant items, and comment from presenters.

In his introduction to the World at One item, Mark Mardell said the 'government had refused to quell' speculation that the government would not take part in an EU coronavirus scheme, which would utilise its 'economic clout' to obtain a good deal. David Salisbury, a former director of immunisation at the department of health, said a problem in the equation was whether it was 'equitable' for a country to say it wanted to have the vaccine first because it had paid for R&D, and a question was whether you would get a better deal on your own or as part of a consortium. The latter depended on the country's size. He said it was a complex issue and perhaps the key issue was possibly equity, making sure everyone had access. Mr Salisbury added that he could see why countries that had paid for R&D wanted the first rights but again noted that did not help equal access. He said that one solution might be the creation of purchasing consortia for countries which could not afford the vaccine.

Mr Salisbury thus suggested as a main point of his contribution that the UK government's approach might lead to a lack of 'equity' in access to any vaccine, and did not agree with the approach.

The tenor of Mr Mardell's contribution suggested upfront that the UK might miss out by not having the EU's 'economic clout' behind it.

On the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News, it was said that the government would not join the EU-wide Covid-19 scheme aimed at securing vaccine supplies at a discount. A quote was included from the Wellcome Foundation that countries needed to work together to secure common ground. This was buttressed by inclusion of that Germany was anticipating a second wave of Covid-19 cases and was urging a 'Europe-wide' response.

In sharp contrast, Global Vision (July 10) provided a different perspective on this<sup>51</sup>, not reported in the BBC coverage. Will Flower said the government was concerned that if it signed up to the scheme, it would delay the roll-out in the UK over a successful UK vaccine, a version of which was being developed in Oxford in a facility leading the world in the global vaccine effort. Mr Flower said that the EU had initially said the UK must drop its support for the Oxford vaccine, and then had decided that the UK could not attend the EU scheme's steering committee and then ruled that the UK could have no say in strategy or deciding who should get the vaccine first.

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<sup>51</sup> <https://globalvisionuk.com/this-week/uk-opts-out-of-eu-scheme-after-brussels-demands-britain-drop-support-for-oxford-vaccine-while-barnier-prepares-to-soften-red-lines-in-negotiations/>

None of this explanation was included in the BBC's short coverage of the matter, but they did have time to include the Wellcome Foundation and EU perspectives. What coverage there was suggested that the UK would miss out if it did not take part in the EU's scheme.

## **Polish Presidential Election**

The first mention was on July 12, when in the Radio 4 Six O'Clock News, it was said that the election could have a profound effect in the country's relationship with the EU. The following morning, on Today, Adam Easton said the result would not be known formally until later, but said it looked like the incumbent, President Duda, was winning, and that would be of concern to Brussels because he had made controversial changes to independent institutions, which, they (Brussels) said undermined the rule of law. He added that the win, if confirmed, would give President Duda 'free rein' to continue controversial reforms and could threaten continued access to high levels of EU funding. The next mention of the elections was on World at One, when Sarah Montague noted that supporters of the President believed he would pull them out of poverty through generous state handouts, but opponents thought he would attack the rights of gay people and threaten democracy through controversial changes to the judiciary. Anita Prazmowska, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics, said Mr Duda's election was very bad news in terms of the judiciary and the free press. The ruling party had also won the October general election, thus giving the government authority to water down all the democratic institutions that the EU wanted to be upheld. Ms Montague asked if there was a fight between the EU and the government. Ms Prazmowska replied there would not be a fight because the government wanted to be free to implement policies without regard for EU policies. She claimed the attack on the judiciary would mean its independence was destroyed. They were also attacking the free press and local autonomy, as well as individual rights with regard to fertility, and upholding 'Polish national interests' in a narrow definition of that.

On the World Tonight, Ritulah Shah commented that the Polish presidential election had 'played on deep divisions with the country, with Andrzej Duda securing a narrow victory with 51.2 per cent of the votes. Ms Shah said that during the election, Mr Duda had suggested that LGBT rights were an ideology more destructive than communism, and had accused his opponent of serving foreign interests rather than those of Poland. Bart Staszewski, an 'LGBT activist' in Poland and a member of the opposition party Civic Platform, said that in future gay couples would not be allowed to become adoptive parents and LGBT people would become second-class citizens. Ms Shah said the victory was the slimmest by a president since 1989 and asked Radoslaw Fogiel, an MP for governing Law and Justice Party if unity would be an issue when almost half the population did not support the president. Mr Fogiel said that divisions had been exaggerated in the election. Ms Shah said Mr Duda's policies were more socially conservative and religious than his opponent, standing for very different sets of values. Mr Fogiel said they were different, but that the election was now over and the need was to live together. Ms Shah asked if Poland was safe for gay people. Mr Fogiel said it was absolutely safe and that gay people enjoyed the same rights as



others. Ms Shah replied that MEPs had claimed the independence of the judiciary was under attack, and asked whether this put Poland on a collision course with the EU. Mr Fogiel suggested that judicial review was much needed to make it more just and open, and asserted that issues of justice were internal ones and not the province of the EU. Ms Shah claimed that all EU member states had to have an independent judiciary. Mr Fogiel said his country was very happy to be a member of the EU, but there was an anger that Brussels bureaucrats were trying to decide things they shouldn't.

Ms Shah then spoke to Dutch MEP Sophie in 't Veld, who sat on the European parliament civil liberties, justice and home affairs committee, and suggested that Mr Duda had claimed the EU was a threat to national harmony. Ms in 't Veld said Poland had signed up to the EU treaties and claimed the judicial reforms were actually 'state capture' of the judicial system. Those opposed to the changes included neutral judges. She further claimed that they were violating EU treaties and opponents were being silenced, coupled with homophobic and anti-Semitic undertones. Mr Shah suggested the EU could not do anything. Ms in 't Veld said members states were concerned and a sanctions procedure had been initiated. Ms Shah suggested there could be five years of tension.

Overall, in the editorial treatment of this topic, there was a 2:1 contributor headcount against the Polish government, and in word terms, a 793-199 (broadly 4:1) imbalance. This was compounded by various comments from both presenters and correspondent Adam Easton. Mr Fogiel had a short opportunity to say that president Duda, working in concert with the Polish government was intent on reforming for the better state institutions and the welfare of the Polish people. But from the outset, it was projected elsewhere that he was undermining both the EU's membership rules and state institutions in Poland, as well as discriminating against gay people. Ms Prazmowska and Sophie in 't Veld both had ample opportunity – without substantial challenge – to put the pro-EU/anti-Duda case, and it dominated consideration of the issues involved.

Almost entirely missing from the coverage was the perspective of figures such as Anna Richards (whose parents live in the same street as the defeated presidential candidate) presented in *The Critic* magazine.<sup>52</sup> She explained (on 20/7/20), that president Duda's main impetus in his campaign was to accept the traditions and sensibilities of his country, and point its way to a more modern and freedom loving future. The BBC, by contrast, projected him primarily as a destroyer of Polish institutions and a man who was biting the hand that fed him, an unequivocally benevolent EU.

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<sup>52</sup> <https://thecritic.co.uk/who-teaches-poles-and-what-does-poland-teach-us/>

# PART FOUR: RUNNING LOG

This section contains summary notes on the full programme transcripts.

## July 6

### Today

(6.16am – business news): Dominic O’Connell noted that a newspaper story was that Royal Dutch Shell, the biggest company listed in London, might move its corporate HQ from Holland to the UK, following Unilever. Sue Noffke, of Schroders, agreed this was the case and said that the current dual structure of both companies it brought quite a lot of complexity and each was trying to achieve restructuring.

(7am - news bulletin): It was reported that – as part of the UK’s post-Brexit sanctions scheme - Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab would independently impose sanctions on dozens of individuals accused of human rights abuses. Previously, this had been done through the EU or the UN. At 8am, James Landale said that after Brexit Britain could now act alone in imposing such sanctions. He said the list would include individuals from Russia, Saudi Arabia and North Korea.

### PM

(5.30pm): Bulletins said those named by the foreign secretary in the sanctions list included those involved in the deaths of the Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, and Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

(5.46pm): Evan Davis said that the foreign secretary’s sanctions were aimed at 49, mostly Russian, foreign individuals. There was a Commons actuality quote from Dominic Raab claiming that the individuals had blood on their hands and were henchmen of dictators. In future, they would not be free to waltz into the country or siphon dirty money through British banks. James Landale suggested this was the first time the UK had a UK-specific, autonomous regime just for human rights abusers. Part of the thinking behind it was that the UK could target individuals without punishing wider society. He added that those with homes in London would not be allowed to use them. Nearly half on the list had been involved in the killing of Sergei Magnitsky, and 20 Saudi nationals allegedly involved in the death of Jamal Khashoggi. Mr Landale said it had been made clear that more lists would follow. Bill Browder, a US campaigner over the death of Sergei Magnitsky, said the US had passed a Magnitsky Act in 2012, and finally the UK had acted. He said that Mr Raab had been supporting getting something done in the UK since 2012, and so this had been a very personal story for him. Mr Davis wondered whether sometimes those higher up in the chain, such as leaders, who had sanctioned deaths and abuses were being overlooked. Mr Browder said the list included the most senior law enforcement officer in Russia, who was not exactly a

little guy, although not Putin. He added that being on the list imposed serious sanctions including frozen bank accounts.

#### **Radio 4 Six O'Clock News**

(6.06pm): The story about the sanctions list was repeated. James Landale said that the foreign secretary had said that the creation of Britain's first independent sanctions regime on human rights showed the world that the UK would not look the other way on such matters. The description of those on the list was repeated, with the addition that two generals from Myanmar and two organisations from North Korea were included. Mr Landale said all sides in the Commons had welcomed the announcement, but many had urged the government to go further and target individuals in China over Hong Kong abuses. He said that Mr Raab had refused to say whether he would do so, then added that the policy was 'a central plank of the government's ambition to make Britain a global defender of international rules and human rights. The task for British diplomats now is to get support from other countries. The biggest test, of course, will be whether it actually deters human rights abuses'.

#### **BBC 1 News at Ten**

(10.02pm): James Robbins claimed this would be an 'important test of will' between 'Britain, a post-imperial power' and the power that would surely dominate for the second part of the century, China. He suggested that an indicator would be how China responded to the UK's offer to allow millions of Hong Kongers to come to the UK. Mr Robbins noted that the list included 20 individuals from Saudi Arabia and said he asked the foreign secretary if that risked jobs in the UK linked with the arms trade. He said that Mr Raab had responded that it was more important that the UK stood up to thugs and despots. Mr Robbins said that Mr Raab had also not ruled out sanctions against the Chinese over treatment of the Uighur people.

#### **The World Tonight**

(10.07pm): The sanctions story was repeated, including quotes from Dominic Raab and Bill Browder. Ritula Shah then said that Britain's post-Brexit foreign policy stance had already been challenged by China, with the country's UK ambassador warning that decisions by the government to exclude Chinese company Huawei from developments of the UK's 5G network showed it had 'succumbed to foreign pressure' and meant it was not independent. Ms Shah asked what this meant in terms of the foreign policy challenges facing the UK as it broke away from the EU. She spoke to Tom Tugendhat, chair of the Commons foreign affairs select committee, and Nathalie Tocci, director of the Institute of International Affairs in Rome, and former adviser to the EU foreign policy chief. Mr Tugendhat claimed that the announcement of sanctions against individuals was a very welcome direction and one his committee had been calling for since 2018. He did not initially answer whether the step was a decisive break 'with our European past'. Ms Tocci said going it alone in imposing sanctions was not the most effective way forward. She accepted that getting agreement at the EU level was slow and tedious, but going it alone

was not necessarily effective and might not lead to where the government wanted. Ms Shah asked Mr Tugendhat how much impact the UK could really have. He replied it could be potentially huge because London was more important than other European capitals, and at the same time 'Europe' had totally failed over the past 40 years to have a foreign policy. It was more important for the UK to be aligned with countries such as the US and Australia. Ms Shah suggested to Ms Tocci that the EU was divided in its approach to Russia and China. In reply, she denied it was divided and claimed there was a 'moving closer' and 'toughening up' on policies to both countries. She added that a question was whether the tougher stance towards China could be backed economically. Mr Tugendhat claimed, in contrast, that the 'European' position on China was extremely divided. He added:

But I think it's absolutely essential that we remember that the point about defending our national interests is the ability to decide our own future. And there's no point in pulling out of Brussels only to hand ourselves over to Beijing.

Ms Shah asked if the UK could go it alone in policy towards Hong Kong and suggested that backing from the US and the EU was needed. Mr Tugendhat said support would be sought from friends and allies, and Britain would stand with other democracies around the world. Ms Shah then suggested to Ms Tocci that the growing relationship between China and Russia presented a headache to the EU incoming up with a common line with regard to issues such as human rights. Ms Tocci denied that was the case and claimed it would be easier. She suggested that the main difference with Mr Tugendhat was that she was convinced that on these matters, size mattered. She said:

And the main disagreement is, is that I'm personally convinced that in these things, size matters. And in order to be able to sort of push forward what a European interest is, critical mass makes the difference and going it alone makes it infinitely harder.

Mr Tugendhat said:

I would say the size does, of course, matter, but size only matters if you're willing to act, if you're not willing to act, size has no relevance at all. And that's why Britain's partnership with many countries around the world matters just as much as it does with others. Look, our very close defensive alliance with France, for example, which has nothing to do with the European Union, is extremely important at a moment like this. And our exceptionally close intelligence partnership with Germany really matters at a time like this, but so does our defensive alliance with Japan and our intelligence partnership with Israel. So does our economic partnership with the United States, with Canada, with Australia and many others. So, of course, our cooperation with various of our European partners matters. And of course, that size matters. But it's the willingness to act, not simply the size that's important. Size on its own is an irrelevance.

**July 7**

**Today**

7am (bulletins): It was noted, in the context of Israel's plans to 'annexe' part of the 'occupied' West Bank that Boris Johnson had phoned the Israeli prime minister to object. James Landale claimed that the government was trying to carve out a post-Brexit role as a defender of 'global rules and norms'.

7.49am: Dr Huiyao Wang, an adviser to the Chinese government who is President of the Centre for China and Globalisation, claimed that the UK's decision to exclude Huawei from the UK that it seemed that the UK was 'unfortunately' trying to follow what the US was following. He asserted that the UK should be more independent and after leaving the EU, not become extreme with a 'populism type of politics', and not claim (with laughter in his voice) that the UK could receive three million residents from Hong Kong. It was not workable.

8.10am: Mishal Husain, suggesting that Philip Hammond had been Chancellor of the Exchequer during a 'golden' period of relationships with China, asked what he thought of the position being adopted by the UK government now after its U-turn on Huawei and the persecuted Uighurs. Mr Hammond claimed that the UK had always been firm behind the scenes, but the UK – in the context of loosening ties with traditional trading partners in Europe in the name of expanding global reach - needed to avoid moving to weaken trade links with China, the world's second-largest economy. So there needed to be a way of welcoming investment from countries with which the UK had frank disagreements. Mr Hammond said he was worried about an outbreak of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Conservative party, and concerned that there needed to be efforts to improve trade relationships around the globe, especially with China, the UK's third largest trading partner after the US and the EU.

**World at One**

1.20pm: Sarah Montague said that the former Chancellor, Philip Hammond, had warned against 'an alarming rise of anti-Chinese sentiment within the Conservative party. He had said the UK was already loosening its ties with the EU and should avoid jeopardising trade with the world's second largest economy. There was a clip from what he had said on Today.

**Newsnight**

10.46pm: Emily Maitlis, first observing that China had warned the UK to think twice about accepting three million Hong Kongers, suggested that the UK was 'finding itself forced' to choose sides, almost, somewhere between the US and China. Gabriel Gatehouse claimed in response that the UK was at the centre of an increasingly sharp battle between the US and China on Huawei, which the US wanted 'locked out' of the UK market. At first it had looked as if the UK could have its cake and eat it, but now the US (both Democrats and Republicans) wanted a choice between Beijing and Washington, and were keen to pull the UK, post-Brexit, onto their side of the equation. 'and not the perhaps more ambivalent

position the EU takes with China. He added there was a groundswell of concern and opinion on China on the backbenches of the Conservative party. This was the 'mood' that Philip Hammond had warned against earlier in the day.

## **July 8**

### **PM**

5.50pm: Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee claimed that the government was not competent enough to deliver the programmes outlined in that days' mini-budget because ministers had been chosen for their Brexit credentials and not for administrative delivery. She pointed to several alleged failures, include the PPE app.

### **Newsnight**

11.01pm: Emil Maitlis suggested that Brexit had 'not gone away' because 'Tory Brexiteer' Steve Baker had raised concerns about the government's plans for the Northern Irish border. There was a House of Commons clip of Mr Baker:

Mr Speaker, to avoid drama later, we need to complete the process of getting Brexit done in the next few months. So will my Right Honourable Friend therefore please confirm, for the benefit of everyone listening, that nothing in the Northern Ireland Protocol will be allowed to stop the United Kingdom charging our own tariffs for the whole United Kingdom from the 1st of January 2021?

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes, Mr Speaker. Not a sausage, not a jot, not a tiddle of the Northern Irish Protocol will provide any such impediment to the unfettered access of goods and services between all parts of the UK.

Ms Maitlis suggested that the plot had thickened with the emergence of a 'leaked letter' written by international trade secretary Liz Truss in which she appeared to warn Boris Johnson that his border plans for Northern Ireland risked smuggling, damaging the UK's international reputation and the possibility of a legal challenge from the WTO. Nick Watt said the letter had been leaked to the Guardian and Business Insider, and was in the context of Michael Gove's announcement that he was going to delay the introduction of full border controls from goods entering from the EU until July in 2021. Ms Truss had said in the letter that the delay could lead to challenge from the WTO if goods coming in from the EU were treated differently from goods from elsewhere. She had also said she feared the danger of smuggling, unscrupulous traders, and the avoidance of paying tariffs, and – interesting in the light of the Steve Baker question - had raised concerns about the relationship between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Mr Watt said the plan was to have checks on goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in order to avoid a hard border in Ireland. He added:

Now, Liz Truss she talks, according to this report in The Guardian, that the digital application of the special tariff regime for Northern Ireland, she says that's been deemed high risk. And then there's this quote from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs are planning to apply the EU tariff as a default to all imports in Northern Ireland from the 1st January. Then she says, 'This is very concerning, as this may call into question Northern Ireland's place in the UK customs territory.' Now, obviously, the Prime Minister in that answer to Steve Baker, he said that there's not a sausage in the Northern Ireland Protocol, which sets all this out, which would provide any impediment to the unfettered access to goods and services between all parts of the UK.

Ms Maitlis asked what reaction there had been to the Business Insider leak. Mr Watt said that Rachel Reeves, Michael Gove's Labour shadow, had claimed ministers were making things up as they went along and had a lack of awareness of the real consequences of border policies. The government had said they did not comment on leaks, but that there would be an updated border operating model published later in the month and it would be up and running by July 2021.

## **July 9**

### **Today**

(Bulletins): It was said that health and social care organisations had written to the prime minister warning that there would be severe staff shortages in the sector when new immigration rules came into effect because workers earned substantially less than the £25,000 stipulated for entry in the UK, usually between £16,000 and £18,000. In the 6.30am edition, it was said that differences had emerged between ministers over plans to introduce full border checks in Northern Ireland after the Brexit transition period. The international trade secretary had written to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, and the Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove warning that it could lead to increased smuggling and the UK 'facing legal action from other countries'.

At 7am, the leaked letter from Liz Truss was mentioned again, with its warning of smuggling and legal challenge. Nick Watt said that work on Brexit was 'grinding on'. Ms Truss – as well as the smuggling warning – had also warned of a possible legal challenge from the WTO on the ground that the WTO could object if goods entering the UK from the EU were treated differently from those originating elsewhere. She had also warned that plans to apply an EU tariff to all imports in Northern Ireland could raise questions about its place in UK customs territory.

6.50am: Danny Mortimer, convenor of the Cavendish coalition (of health and social care bodies) and chief executive of NHS Employers, claiming that out of the 1.5 million social care jobs there were 122,000 vacancies England. He said that there were 115,000 EU nationals and 35,000 non-EU citizens employed in the social care sector, and there would be problems of recruitment when the new immigration rules came into effect, because most earned less than the stipulated minimum. Martha Kearney asked whether there should be such reliance on workers from overseas. Mr Mortimer said the sector wanted UK nationals to be employed, but there had been a lack of investment in social care, with the result that employers

could not offer high enough salaries. He added that the solution – contained in a letter written to the government – was to offer longer work contracts than 12 months for the lower paid roles.

### **BBC1 News at One**

1.21pm: Ed Davey, acting leader of the Liberal Democrats, said in a report by Jessica Parker, that his party had made a mistake at the general election by focussing too much on one issue (Brexit).

Kieran Shudall, of the band Circa Waves, said that with all the bad news around, such as Brexit, there was a need for escapism .

### **BBC Two, Newsnight**

Emma Barnett said the European Commission had warned that from January 1, there would be tough border checks when entering EU countries and that the right to use a British driving licence or take pets when visiting the EU would end. Nick Watt, after noting ‘deal or no deal?’, then ‘friends or adversaries?’, said a harder border between Britain and the EU would come into force next year ‘come what may’. Mr Watt detailed that the changes would include

customs formalities on all goods, something that would happen with or without a trade deal. He added that Boris Johnson would outline its plans in the following week, then suggested that cabinet member Liz Truss feared that plans to phase in checks in Northern Ireland on EU goods could lead to smuggling and WTO action against preferential treatment for EU goods. He added:

HMRC’s decision to apply the EU tariff as a default to all imports in Northern Ireland. She warned that that could raise questions about Northern Ireland’s place in the UK Customs Territory. Northern Ireland will have a closer relationship with the EU to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. But the warning about a default EU tariff, rather than the planned digitised dual UK and EU tariff system is causing alarm. And in a letter leaked to the Business Insider website, the International Trade Secretary has questioned

Aodhán Connolly, of the Northern Ireland Retail Federation, suggested that the new tariff regime would cause huge cashflow problems, and making it hard to do business in Northern Ireland. Mr Watt added that Peter MacSwinney, who advised Whitehall on customs matters, had concerns about how well the government had ‘engaged with industry’. Mr MacSwinney said in the first six months of the year such engagement had been non-existent, and now – despite efforts – it was ‘too little, too late. He added that it seemed that control was not with individual government department, but rather with central government – and their aim was to spread ‘a political statement’ about getting on with it. Mr Watt said the government was taking a relaxed approach that day, saying it was getting on with things, but also possibly taking a swipe at Liz Truss by stating that the UK approach is WTO compliant. He concluded that ‘choppy times’ were ahead.

Emily Barnett said the programme had asked the government to take part but it had declined. She spoke to Hilary Benn, chair of the Commons Brexit select committee, and Peter Bone, a member. Ms Barnett



first asked Mr Bone if it was embarrassing that Liz Truss, the Cabinet minister in charge of international trade, was this worried about the borders with five months to go. Mr Bone suggested she was talking about the contents of a leaked letter and asserted that – irrespective of whether that was right or wrong – talks were proceeding towards a comprehensive free trade deal with the EU. Ms Barnett insisted that Ms Truss was worried about a legal challenge from the WTO. Mr Bone said that the issue had been discussed in the select committee and experts had said it was not a problem. In addition, if the free trade deal was reached, the problems would just disappear anyway. Ms Barnett insisted that Ms Truss remained worried. Mr Bone replied that unless she could quote her on the record as saying this, he was not aware of it. He added that this was scaremongering over having an implementation period, a process which made great sense. Ms Barnett repeated that Ms Truss was a member of the government and this was a leaked letter sent to Rishi Sunak and Michael Gove.

She then asked Hilary Benn how the concern raised in the letter about the WTO could be resolved. Mr Benn said he was least concerned about the WTO because it would take six months to go through the dispute resolution process. The bigger issue, as was said in the report was that the UK was not ready and it was not entirely clear what we needed to be ready for. Goods needed to be checked when they came into the UK and facilities had not yet been built for that. Also, with outward goods, businesses would have to pay for paperwork they did not have at the moment, something which was the last they needed because of coronavirus. The government was also waiting for an IT application, a vehicle movement service, and it had not yet been built. Businesses were saying with only five months to go, for goodness sake, what are we planning for? The border plan was needed ‘very urgently indeed’. Ms Barnett asked Mr Bone if he shared those concerns. He replied that it could be done in the time available, and Dover had given evidence that it was ‘completely relaxed’. Leading customs experts said the same thing. Business was going to be told what was required in a plan to be announced in the following week. He repeated that the prospect of a free trade deal indicated that things were going ‘rather well’. He did not see the need for doom and gloom. Ms Barnett suggested that Ms Truss had concerns about smuggling. Mr Bone said he did not and also repeated that there was no confirmation of the contents of the letter. He added that smuggling was detected not by a chap in a peaked cap but by intelligence, and that was continuing. The idea of an increased smuggling risk was wrong. Mr Benn said that if the remarks by Liz Truss were correct there was a concern about smuggling, but then said he agreed with Peter Bone that intelligence was the key to customs checks. He claimed there were, however, other concerns such as a delay in delivery times and IT systems.

11.11am: Alan Little claimed he had been following the Scottish independence debate for 40 years since the 1978 referendum, and one thing had remained constant:

. . . it's this: that support for devolution, and now independence, builds when there's a perception that Westminster is imposing on Scotland policies that were rejected at the ballot box here when the popular legitimacy of Westminster rule can be called into question. One day, the pandemic and this strange way of living will be over. But Brexit will still be with us. And Scotland voted

decisively against it. If, as polls suggest, the SNP win a majority at Holyrood next year will that be enough to force Boris Johnson to grant a second referendum?

He said that Nicola Sturgeon insisted that the UK would not be able to disregard a clear electoral mandate. Former SNP MP George Kerevan agreed with the point and added that Ms Sturgeon's plan was to 'wear him down'. Mr Little added:

Is this spike in support for independents solely down to the pandemic, or is it just the latest chapter in a long, slowly unwinding story that stretches back decades? I hear today the echo of an earlier chapter in that story. In the 1980s, Scotland did not want to walk the path mapped out by Margaret Thatcher, but as part of the United Kingdom, it had to. That experience transformed the way Scotland thought about its place in the union and created a three to one solid majority in favour of creating the Scottish Parliament. And this is what makes today a sit up and pay attention moment for anyone who supports the union. Are we now in a similar place? For Scotland doesn't want to walk the Brexit path either, but will have to, as part of the United Kingdom. The question is whether that has a similarly transformative effect on the way Scotland thinks about independence.

## July 10

Today (6.16am business news): Jane Foley, of Rabobank said that sterling had enjoyed a strong July, but a euro currently was costing 89.5 pence to buy, compared with 70 or 75 pence at the time of the referendum. Rob Young asked if the 'highly uncertain' trade talks with the EU were having an impact on sterling. Ms Foley replied:

They have. I mean, certainly this year the Brexit theme has certainly re-entered into the markets. And, of course, there's a lot of confusion. We've had comments that Barnier, the chief negotiator in the eurozone, just . . . just overnight, that there are still significant divergence. We had an open letter from UK businesses a week or so ago reminding the government that it would be a lot of upheaval if there wasn't a deal. And the fear of confusion at the borders, queues at the borders is something which does worry investors. And that's one significant reason why you've had pressure on the pound in these last few months.

**World at One** (1.07pm): Pamela Nash, a former Labour MP in Scotland, opined that support for independence in Scotland always rose at times of crisis, for example after the Brexit vote.

1.29am (Russia report): Mark Mardell suggested that a long-delayed report on Russian influence in British elections and the Brexit referendum was likely to be published, despite continuing delays in settling the composition of the Commons Intelligence committee. Former MP and chair of the committee Dominic Grieve, claimed it was unfortunate that the report had not been published a year previously and now wanted it to be as soon as possible. Another former MP and chair of the committee, Malcolm Rifkind, said it was a disgrace and the result of 'indolence' that it had taken seven months to appoint a chair of the committee and that was the responsibility of the prime minister. He discounted the idea that the delay had been caused because of a reluctance to publish the Russia report, but because of a dispute over chairmanship. Mr Mardell asked if he thought Chris Grayling was the man for the job. Mr Rifkind said

that he was in the frame, but also Theresa Villiers and independent Conservative MPs such as Julian Lewis and Mark Pritchard.

1.34am (EU vaccine): Mark Mardell said that Downing Street had 'refused to quell speculation'; that the government would not take part in an EU coronavirus scheme which planned to use the EU's economic clout to try negotiate a good deal with companies trying to make a vaccine. He claimed the government had previously said it would consider joining, but had now suggested that it would not. David Salisbury, a former director of immunisation at the department of health, said a problem in the equation was whether it was 'equitable' for a country to say it wanted to have the vaccine first because it had paid for R&D, and a question was whether you would get a better deal on your own or as part of a consortium. The latter depended on the country's size. He said it was a complex issue and perhaps the key issue was possibly equity, making sure everyone had access. Mr Salisbury added that he could see why countries that had paid for R&D wanted the first rights but again noted that did not help equal access. He said that one solution might be the creation of purchasing consortia for countries which could not afford the vaccine.

**PM** (5.18pm – intelligence committee): Caroline Wyatt said that Boris Johnson had approved the appointment of eight MPs to the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, and favoured the appointment of former transport secretary Chris Grayling as chairman. She added that in 'securocrat circles' about the impartiality of the committee, with one response being that it was 'astonishing' that Mr Grayling was being considered. There was a clip of Mr Grayling apologising over a failed investment to try deal with problems of a 'no deal' Brexit. Peter Ricketts, the former national security adviser to David Cameron, said he did not think Mr Grayling had the authority or reputation to become committee chair. He said previous occupants of the role like Dominic Grieve were respected across Parliament because they would fearlessly stand up to the government if necessary, but Mr Grayling did not have that degree of authority and was not independent-minded. Ms Wyatt asked if the report on 'Russian interference in Brexit' would be the first thing on the committee's agenda. Mr Ricketts said he guessed it would be, and claimed that this was the first time such an intelligence report had been held up 'probably for political reasons' by the prime minister. He conceded there might be nothing of concern in the report, but said he was disturbed that publication had been held up for eight months.

5.47pm (Covid-19 impact): John Elledge of the New Statesman claimed that the future of cities was threatened by things like the Brexit vote.

#### **R4, Six O'Clock News**

6.08pm (EU vaccine scheme): It was repeated that the government had said that Britain would not join the EU-wide scheme aimed at securing supplies of coronavirus vaccines, with Tim Barrow, the UK's ambassador to the EU explaining that if it did, Britain could not continue independent talk with manufacturers. The item also said that the medical foundation Wellcome Trust had said countries urgently needed to work together to ensure equal access to vaccines. Iain Watson explained that the government

had withdrawn from the EU scheme because it wanted its own talks with manufacturers and also to have a say over prices and volumes received.

A second EU-related item said that a relaxation of quarantine rules meant that people coming into the UK from a range of dozens countries including France and Germany would no longer have to self-isolate for two weeks. It was said that the German health minister had warned of an 'inevitable' second wave of infections and said his country was pressing for a Europe-wide response.

#### **R4, World Tonight**

The UK's decision not to join the EU-wide scheme to secure supplies of coronavirus vaccine was mentioned.

#### **July 11**

*No EU coverage on any of the monitored programmes*

#### **July 12**

##### **BBC One Weekend News (Lunchtime)**

1pm (UK Borders): Ben Brown said the government had announced that more than £700 million was to be spent on the UK's border systems in preparation for the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1. The announcement had followed a leaked letter from international trade secretary Liz Truss raising concerns about the readiness of British ports, and accusations of complacency from Labour. Nick Eardley said the changes on January 1 would mean checks on incoming goods to the UK, but there was concern about how long it was taking to get ready for this. There was a quote from cabinet office minister Michael Gove who said that more than £700 million would be available to provide infrastructure and technology at ports, and also to make sure there were the personnel to ensure safety. Mr Eardley said that Mr Gove was not clear, though, when the new infrastructure would be ready, and some ministers believed there could be challenges from the WTO. Rachel Reeves, the shadow cabinet office minister, claimed it was too little, too late. There had been four years to plan. Mr Eardley added that Michel Barnier, in Downing Street on Tuesday, had said that there were trade issues still to be resolved. Micheal Martin, the prime minister of Ireland, claimed progress had been slow and that an injection of momentum was needed to bring trade discussions to a conclusion. Mr Eardley concluded that the UK had said it wanted a decision by October from the EU about whether there was going to be a trade deal or not.

##### **The World This Weekend**

1pm (bulletins): It was said that cabinet office minister Michael Gove had 'defended' preparations for new border arrangements with the EU after Labour had said the government was being too slow. Mr

Gove had also said that measures for Northern Ireland would be announced later in the month. There was a voice piece from Nick Eardley on similar lines to the television news.

### **BBC One Weekend News (Evening)**

5.57am (UK borders): This was a repeat of earlier information. Iain Watson also said that the government's decision not to extend the transition period beyond the end of the year meant the UK would leave the EU customs union and that a 'friction-free' border with 'our biggest market' would no longer be possible. He added that to 'avoid a cliff-edge' new UK customs procedures would be phased in between January and July, but were unlikely to be fully operational in 12 months' time. He repeated that Liz Truss had expressed concerns that the necessary border infrastructure was not in place and wanted assurances that there would be no further delays. Mr Watson said:

Even if Boris Johnson does get a free trade deal with the EU this year, the new customs checks and many of the new facilities at our ports are still going to be necessary. But remember, the referendum was four years ago, so the opposition are asking publicly, some Conservative MP privately, why it's only now that we appear to be getting some of the post-Brexit preparations under way.

There was a quote from Rachel Reeves. Mr Watson concluded that at the end of the year, when transition ended, 'Brexit really will feel like Brexit'.

### **R4 Six O'Clock News**

6.07pm (UK Borders): The bulletin opened with a repeat of that in the World This Weekend. Iain Watson explained that £470 million of the money would be spent on new border infrastructure and £235 million on IT systems and staff. He noting that ministers claimed the spending was unprecedented, adding his own opinion that it was also essential because the decision not to extend the EU transition period beyond the end of 2020 made the need for new customs facilities essential because the UK would be out of the EU's customs union and single market. There was a quote from Michael Gove said that this planning had been underway for months. Mr Watson added:

But I've been told that some or all of the new customs facilities won't be in place until July 2021, six months after the transition period ends. And the government has already said it would phase in the new customs arrangements. The EU will impose its checks in full on January 1.

The Rachel Reeves quote about 'too little' too late' was repeated.

6.09pm (Polish elections): It was said that in Poland, voters have been deciding who will be their next president in an election that could have a profound impact on the country's relations with the EU.

### **BBC One, Weekend News (Late)**

10.08pm (UK Borders): There was a report of the core news item on the spending of £700m on new border arrangements. Iain Watson then said:

Welcome back to Brexit. It's perhaps not been uppermost in our thoughts during the coronavirus crisis, but this week, the government's publicity machine will begin to convey the big changes that will take place when the Brexit transition period ends. The government has decided not to extend it into next year. So from January, Brexit may really mean Brexit. The UK's biggest channel port, will be in the front line of the new customs procedures as we'll be leaving the EU's customs union at the end of the year. New checks on goods will be unavoidable. Tomorrow, traders will get a hefty 100 pages of guidance on the new rules. And today, the government said it would pour hundreds of millions of pounds into new facilities, IT systems and staff recruitment.

MICHAEL GOVE Cabinet Office Minister: We will be, we know, outside both a single market and the customs union come what may. And that means that business needs to take some steps and governments certainly need to take some steps in order to make sure we're ready. That's the basis of the announcement today. More than £700 million in order to provide infrastructure at ports to invest in technology and also to make sure that we have the personnel to keep ourselves safe.

IW: Some of this new infrastructure simply won't be ready by January the 1st. The government's going to phase in its new customs checks over a six month period. But the EU will impose its checks from the start of 2021. In a leaked letter to Michael Gove, the International Trade, Secretary, Liz Truss expressed concerns about a lack of border infrastructure and wanted assurances there'll be no further delays. Even if Boris Johnson does get a free trade deal with the EU this year, the new customs checks and many of the new facilities at our ports are still going to be necessary. But remember, the referendum was four years ago, so the opposition are asking publicly, some conservative MPs privately, why it's only now that we appear to be getting some of the post-Brexit preparations underway.

RACHEL REEVES Shadow Cabinet Office Minister: I think it's too little, too late. It's only just over five months now until the end of the transition period. The government have had four years now to put in place the procedures that we need to ensure the free flow of goods and services across that border.

IW: When the transition period ends, there won't just be checks on goods coming from the EU, but on people too. The Home Secretary. Priti Patel was in Calais today, today signing a cooperation agreement with France to clamp down on illegal immigration. But tomorrow she'll outline new restrictions on legal migration too, when free movement ends. So from January next year, there'll be big changes at the border. Now, when we formally left the EU at the end of January this year, not very much changed in our everyday lives. We're still following EU rules during that transition period. But I think, Mishal, this week the government's going to give us a real sense, for better or worse, of what life will feel like outside the EU. There's going to be Commons statements, there's going to be that big publicity campaign telling businesses and the rest of us how we're going to be affected. Now, talks are still going on with Brussels to try to strike a trade deal, but deal or no deal by January next year I think it's going to really feel as though Brexit has arrived.

## July 13

### Today

6am: Bulletins: It was said that with less than six months to go before the end of the Brexit transition period, the government was encouraging the public and businesses to prepare for the changes ahead with adverts in the lead up to the leaving of the single market and customs union, and advise to travellers to the EU to check their passports and take out comprehensive health insurance. Iain Watson said that changes ahead included a 100-page document setting out how businesses should navigate new export

and import rules, and advice that travel insurance would be necessary as the European health card would be invalid. There would also be mobile phone roaming charges, and planning to take pets abroad would take months.

It was also reported that home secretary Priti Patel would set out more details of the UK's post-Brexit immigration system, including the ending of free movement for European Union citizens and steps to give equal access to the UK from any country in the world. Ministers had also said it would be easier for health workers, graduates and highly-skilled applicants to get visas. Tom Symonds expanded on this and said that the skilled worker route would be the most complex.

In the 6.30am version, it was said also said that Labour had warned that the new immigration system could cause major problems for the NHS and care sector.

In the 8am version, a quote from Damian Green was included (based on his appearance on Today) in which he said the government had yet to start testing the new digital customs system, and that it was 'hugely important' for the country that it was a success so that chaos on the motorways would be avoided.

6.13am (Polish election): Adam Easton said the official result would not known until later, but it looked as though the incumbent president, Mr Duda was just in the lead. He said that if this result was confirmed, it would be of concern to Brussels, which had criticised 'controversial' changes he had made to 'independent institutions'. Mr Easton added:

I'm thinking of the judiciary, but also the public media, which they say have undermined the rule of law. Now, if President Duda has won re-election, there are no general . . . the next general election in Poland is in three years' time. So the government has a free rein with a supportive president to continue some of those controversial reforms and those changes to the judiciary, which, as I say, has raised some concern in Brussels. And even there's now debate about linking EU funds, Poland is the largest recipient of the EU funds under the current budget, to rule of law issues.

6.32am (Brexit): Norman Smith said the 'UK's new start' would mean more costs across the board, that people would have to spend more, that you would have to be better prepared, plan more and probably require a bundle more paperwork before you go to the EU. On passports, there would have to be six months still to run; that taking the car abroad would need an international driving licence; a green card; a GB sticker; yellow 'tinty things' on car headlights; health insurance because the EU health card would not be valid; a check on whether you would be hit by mobile phone roaming charges; and four months' planning to take a pet abroad, including a possible rabies injection. He said it meant that pets of Britain would say farewell to the Dordogne. Nick Robinson asked about the impact on businesses. Mr Smith said:

similar sort of story, although the . . . business will have to wait to see what sort of trade deal we get, because if we end up on World Trade Organisation terms, there'll be an awful lot more requirements on business in terms, potentially, of tariffs and full border checks. But as things stand at the moment, they will have to get an Economic Operator's Number to export to the EU. They will almost certainly have to employ customs agents to carry out customs declarations. That will be a cost. It's estimated that each customs form will be around £32 and that in a year British business will require 400 million customs forms. So you get a sense of the scale of the cost. On the plus side,

what the government is emphasising is that for business there will be opportunities in those countries which we are striking our own trade deals with. So far I think we've got around 19 trade deals, not with any of the big hitters, not with America, China or India, but with countries like, South Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, those sort of countries. So the government will seek to emphasise the opportunities to business, as well as the costs.

6.35am (Immigration): Nick Robinson said that the points based immigration system had been announced before and asked Tom Symonds what was genuinely new in the government announcement. Mr Symonds said it confirmed that free movement would end but now a new regime of rules would apply to everyone. At the same time, the government was not introducing a low-skilled or temporary work route because it wanted to end a reliance on cheap labour. Mr Robinson asked who would be allowed to work in care homes. Mr Symonds those running care homes were 'particularly concerned' because the government was trying to stop cheap labour entering the UK. In care homes, the need for qualifications would be reduced slightly but would still be there. Mr Robinson then asked whether, as the plans suggested, it would be easier to chuck out criminals. Mr Symonds said it was not straightforward.

6.53am (borders): Justin Webb said that a consequence of having a 'harder border' between France and England was that lorries going to France would be 'backed up' occasionally. He said Michael Gove had referred to 'pieces of infrastructure in order to smooth the flow of traffic', and Mr Webb suggested that these could include a 27-acre site in Ashford. Damian Green, MP for the area, said the full plans had not yet been published, but it looked like they would include an emergency lorry park. He claimed the wrong site had been chosen because it was too close to housing. Mr Webb asked where they should go. Mr Green suggested a series of smaller holding places along the M2. Mr Webb said that people who did not want the UK to leave EU were saying that people in Ashford were getting what they voted for. Mr Green replied that such a response was churlish. Mr Webb said people knew there was going to be friction at the borders and they voted for Brexit, 'so here we are'. Mr Green agreed that there would be friction, but said that should not have long queues permanently. He added that the government measures, if they worked smoothly, would mean the lorry park was not needed. A concern was that there were only six months to go and testing had not begun. Mr Webb asked how confident he was that January 1 would go smoothly. Mr Green said no one knew. Mr Webb suggested this was 'highly unsatisfactory, as we have known for years we are leaving the EU'. Mr Green repeated he did hope things worked smoothly.

7.09am (immigration): Alan Manning, former chair of the Migratory Advisory Committee, who stressed he was speaking in his personal capacity, said the government's new approach to health service workers coming in to the UK was a good idea but not game-changing, and pointed out it would be hard to judge until the precise new rules were known. He added that NHS workers were not expected to be a problem because pay scales were higher, but in social care, he claimed, there was a serious problem because workers were underpaid. There were plenty of people in the UK who could do the jobs, but they didn't want to because of the pay. It was hard to foresee what would happen, and to find money to increase pay. Mr Webb said money was being found at the moment 'which we didn't think existed'. Mr Manning



said the need was to act now to increase pay. Mr Webb returned that trade deals were being made, and that one was likely with Turkey. In return, they would want people to be allowed to work in the UK. He suggested that factors like this would determine things in the long run. Mr Manning disputed the point on the ground that the migration part of trade deals were minimal.

7.34am (Brexit): Nick Robinson played an excerpt from the government ad about planning for the Post-Brexit future. He said that many would only notice departure when the transition period ended and the UK left the customs union and the single market., then asked rhetorically how businesses were feeling about the 'costs and opportunities' that lay ahead. Kate Lester, chief executive of Diamond Logistics, suggested that the devil was in the detail and she and other hauliers needed to know what to expect, but did not. Mr Robinson asked whether in bureaucracy terms, the new customs regime, she knew what to expect. Ms Lester said it was known that customs forms would rise from 50 million documents per year to 250 million. That would require 50,000 extra customs staff. Companies like hers needed also to know what to do on tech platforms. Mr Robinson asked if she had been consulted. Ms Lester replied that she had not been, either in person or via trade bodies. James Greenham, of EMS Physio, said he traded all over the world and so was luckily abreast of documentation outside the EU, but also said he had not been consulted by the government other than in respect of that he would need advice from a customs agent. Mr Robinson asked if it would be a big extra burden, or simply a change in mindset, of practice and habit.

Mr Greenham replied that there would be a change in practice and habit, and some orders would be delayed because of the new procedures. But his products were not spoiled by such delay and so no one would be badly affected. Mr Robinson asked whether there would be new opportunities because that had been 'the point of Brexit' Mr Greenham said this was not likely to be the case because his company already exported all over the world. Mr Robinson then asked Ms Lester if hauliers were prepared for the fact that there were likely to be lorries lining up in their thousands in places such as Ashford. Ms Lester replied:

. . . I think that's going to be a real problem and certainly in terms of delay of, as you say, goods that have got a time-critical element to it, whether that's foodstuffs or anything else, that's under sort of quite high demand. I mean, I think the whole concept of this frictionless trade really needs to be looked at and indeed enhanced and, and, as opposed to Brexit creating opportunities, I've certainly found that it's reduced opportunities to businesses such as ours. You know, we . . . the UK used to be a hub for exporting a lot of goods from China, for example, all around Europe. So anything that's going to be restricting that and reducing that means that, you know, those Chinese clients, those American clients will move their hubs to Europe and use that as their European distribution. So it's . . . it's, you know, had a negative impact rather than a positive impact thus far. But, you know, who knows what happens in the future?

8.20am (Brexit information campaign): Justin Webb suggested that the worry behind the government ad campaign was that quite a lot of us had forgotten that there would have to be changes. Laura Kuenssberg agreed and said that leaving the customs union and single market was a 'really big change'. She said that a lot of business was frustrated that it was not clear enough what the world would look

like. She said that there might be changes in roaming charges for mobile phones; the EU health card would no longer be valid; if you lived near a port £700 millions of new 'infrastructure was being put up soon; we would have to cope with new customs systems, with especially pressure in Northern Ireland to avoid a hard border; and there would be divergence of laws between the two sides of the Channel. She referred to the Liz Truss 'leaked letter' and suggested there was overall concern in the government that it was not quite ready for all of this, 'let alone the populations and businesses that would have to grapple with this on the ground'. Justin Webb then referred to the 'lack of a trade deal' and wondered what the options were getting a deal which altered some of the factors before January. Ms Kuenssberg said talks had been continuing to a familiar drumbeat, with sticking points which included what was happening to fishing, and to permissible levels of state aid. She said time was tight to reach agreement against a background that the EU were saying that the biggest changes were coming anyway irrespective of a trade deal. She added:

That's not to minimise the importance of the trade deal and all the other arrangements that have to be made over security and, you know, a very, very long list of other things that have to be sorted out, but we're in a different phase to the 'deal or no deal' of 2018/19 to the 'deal or no deal' that has to be done, or not, by the end of 2020.

8.55am (Brexit and pets): Nick Robinson reminded the audience that Norman Smith had recounted the problems he might have in taking his dog to the Dordogne. He suggested to Daniella dos Santos of the British Veterinary Association that there was conflicting advice from the government, and a fear was that the UK would become an 'unlisted' country. She said that if that happened cats, dogs and ferrets would need a rabies vaccination, which took four months before travelling abroad was allowed. Mr Robinson asked if a 'no deal' Brexit would mean Britain was unlisted. Ms dos Santos said it would. She said that other possibilities were that Britain would become Part One or Part Two 'listed'.

## **World at One**

1pm bulletins: Dominic Casciani reported that home secretary Priti Patel had told the Commons that the UK's new points-based immigration system would attract the 'brightest and best' skilled workers and encourage employers to employ British nationals rather than relying on overseas labour. He said that Downing Street had confirmed that foreign social care workers would not be allowed to apply for jobs under a new visa that would prioritise filling roles in the health and caring professions. Instead, the prime ministers spokesman had councils would be given an extra £1.5 billion to fund the sector. Skilled workers applying for UK jobs would need to earn at least £20,480. Criminals who had served 12 months in jail could be banned.

1.24pm (freedom of movement): Sarah Montague first noted that free movement was going to end of the year. Peter Walsh, of the Migration Observatory at Oxford University said the new system would treat EU nationals the same as those from the rest of the world. Those allowed to enter would need to have a skilled job earning more than £25,600, be able to speak English, with no exceptions for lower skilled workers. He said that the hospitality sector would be bitterly disappointed and although there

was a social care visa, most care workers would be ineligible. Ms Montague said the priority of the government was that British people would take up social care jobs. Mr Walsh said it was not clear that Britons would rush to fill poorly-paid vacancies. He added that the government hoped that shortages of labour would push wages up. Care home owner Joyce Pinfield, who was also on the board of the National Care Association, said she was disappointed that social care requirements had not been taken into account in the new immigration framework. Before Covid-19 there had been 122,000 social care placements on offer, mostly perceived as very poorly paid. It might be possible to attract managers under the new system, but not carers. Ms Montague noted that the prime minister had said the government had put up the living wage by a record amount and asked if this might help. Ms Pinfield said the issue was actually local authority fees which had not been increasing at the same rate as the living wage.

1.35pm (polish election): Sarah Montague said supporters of the re-elected Polish president would lift people out of poverty through generous state handouts, while critics claimed he threatened democracy and would make controversial changes to the judiciary, and discriminate against gay people. She said the vote was so close 'it suggests a polarised society'. Anita Prazmowska, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics, said Mr Duda's election was very bad news in terms of the judiciary and the free press. The ruling party had also won the October general election, thus giving the government authority to water down all the democratic institutions that the EU wanted to be upheld. Ms Montague asked if there was a fight between the EU and the government. Ms Prazmowska replied there would not be a fight because the government wanted to be free to implement policies without regard for EU policies. She claimed the attack on the judiciary would mean its independence was destroyed. They were also attacking the free press and local autonomy, as well as individual rights with regard to fertility, and upholding 'Polish national interests' in a narrow definition of that.

### **BBC1 News at One**

1.16pm Post Brexit Immigration: Tom Symonds outlined what the provisions of the new immigration system were. This was a repeat of reports already detailed above.

### **PM**

5pm bulletins: These were a repeat of the Dominic Casciani report earlier in the day.

5.36pm (post-Brexit immigration): In the introduction, Evan Davis said that unskilled workers would be excluded from migrating for a job, which was a huge change from the EU free movement system. He added that in other respects there was liberalisation, for example graduates being allowed to stay for two years after their studies. There a clip from the Priti Patel Commons statement in which she said free movement was ending and a points-based system introduced in its stead. This would be a 'firmer but fairer' system signalling that Britain was open for business. Mr Davis added that an issue was social care workers who would not be allowed in unless they were paid 'a good deal more' than the current going

rates. Shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds asserted that the government did not see care workers to be skilled workers and asked what the government had against them. Mr Davis said:

Well, the government says it wants employers to know. We know that the government plan is for employers to pay more and invest in training and development for people in the UK to become care workers. So as well as resolving the existing financial problems of the sector, there may also be funding needed to raise wages there. Now, on the terms of the new arrangements for immigration, it's just over £20,000 or £25,000 a year that marks the entry points to get in. It depends on your price (sic) . . . precise circumstances. So are we ready in this country for this? Ready to pay more, for example, for sectors like care if they can't get staff? This debate about unskilled migration, which . . . which effectively ends under these proposals, played a very large part in the Brexit referendum and the commitment to leave the EU. Let us talk to Richard Tice, businessman and former chairman of the Brexit Party.

Mr Davis asked Mr Tice if he was happy with the new system. He replied that he was, and because of Covid-19, the UK was facing levels of unemployment that the country had not seen since the 1980s. That is why it was important to have a system that brought in the brightest and the best and stopped companies being incentivised to have a race to the bottom to bring in low-skilled or unskilled workers from outside the UK when millions of UK citizens would be looking for jobs. Mr Davis suggested he was saying that he favoured unskilled jobs for British workers and deskilling the British worker by getting them to do jobs instead of foreigners. Mr Tice said that was not the case. The situation would revert to pre-2004 in the way the market worked. There would be an imperative to raise the price to attract labour, or invest in capital equipment to replace labour. He asserted:

That's what always used to happen for about 150 years. If you have an unlimited supply of low skilled labour then the price of that labour will either stay the same or go down. What will now happen, and this is actually a huge positive for the care sector, is that wages for care workers, quite rightly, need to be increased quite considerably.

He added that his daughter was working as a fruit picker, and currently, it suited farmers to attract workers from Eastern Europe and in effect to get their costs back by charging for them to stay in mobile accommodation provided by the farmer. Mr Davis asked if he thought the key thing was that the new system pushed wages up in low-skilled jobs, and thus attracted British workers. Mr Tice agreed. Mr Davis asked if that was the case, whether Britain was ready to pay more, and whether in the wake of Covid, that would work. Mr Tice thought it would. Mr Davis asked if he foresaw tax going up. He replied:

. . . and frankly, one of the ways to help us out of this economic crisis is to have a dose of inflation, which will deflate away some of the huge debts being incurred. So, yes, inflation would be welcome. A rise in wages for low . . . you know, the lower skilled jobs would be welcome. And, you know, it's . . . it's a . . . it's a win-win, albeit at a time of, of, of tragedy and, and, and sadness when you know, hundreds of thousands of young people are going to struggle to find jobs.

Mr Davis asked if some industries which had been exporting might shut up shop because wages would go up and they would not be competitive. Mr Tice suggested it would be the complete opposite. The currency had weakened and there was now a huge opportunity for UK manufacturing PLC to actually manufacture and source and supply and develop goods here in the UK, employing people in the UK. He

cited what he said was the government's 'excellent' decision to invest £500 million in the OneWeb satellite system – that was using state aid which could not have been done as members of the EU that would generate investment in technology and hopefully high-quality jobs.

#### **Radio 4 Six O'Clock News**

There was a repeat of the Dominic Casciani report, together with clips from the home secretary and her shadow. At the end of the sequence, Raj Seghal, a care home manager in Norfolk, said the sector had 'desperately hoped' that the measure would help fill 120,000 vacancies, but there was 'absolutely nothing' for social care, which was 'outrageous' and now it was no longer possible to recruit from European markets. Mr Casciani said the government had said it was investing £1.5 billion in the sector and defended the exclusion of social care workers and had asserted that immigration would not solve recruitment problems.

6.09 (post-Brexit immigration): It was said that Michael Gove had urged businesses to be ready for the UK's departure from the single market and customs union. Newsreader Neil Sleet then asserted that regardless of the outcome of UK-EU negotiations, the government had acknowledged there would be greater friction at the UK's borders. Reality Check correspondent Chris Morris said:

Businesses have been put on notice. Even if a trade deal is done, there will be a host of new border checks. Customs declarations will have to be made. The government estimates there will be 400 million more than there are now. There'll also be checks on compliance with regulatory and sanitary standards. The government says it plans to phase in these requirements for imports into the UK over the first six months of next year. But for exports, the EU says they'll apply straight away, on January 1. Michael Gove stressed that the government is spending hundreds of millions of pounds on infrastructure and on a new IT system to get the border ready for the end of the transition period. And he urged businesses and citizens to be prepared.

MICHAEL GOVE: The actions, Mr Speaker, that we're taking today are an important step towards readiness for the new opportunities that Brexit can bring. It is time for our new start, time for us to embrace a new global destiny.

CM: But from next year, there will also be more barriers to trade for companies selling services, including financial services, to Europe and new restrictions for citizens crossing the channel. They will no longer be able, for example, to use European health insurance cards or pet passports. And UK nationals will need a visa for any stay of more than 90 days in a 180 day period. Many of these measures will also apply, of course, to European companies and citizens who want to trade with or travelled to the UK. But while they'll have to deal with new restrictions in one country, the UK will have to deal with them in 26 countries. Ireland is a special case, but the agreement to keep the border with the Republic of Ireland as open as it is now means there will be a regulatory border within the UK between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. A new software platform, the Goods Vehicle Movement Service, will be introduced to deal with trade across the Irish Sea. It's not yet been trialled, but it needs to be fully operational in less than six months' time.

The next item focused on the new immigration points system. It was said that the government proposals had met with an angry response from health organisations and unions, while the head of the NHS Network, which planned recruitment, warning that the sector was facing a 'staffing black hole'. Care England, which 'speaks for independent providers of adult social care' had accused the government of

failing to take into account the sector's specific needs, while the GMB union – representing NHS staff – had said the proposals were an embarrassing shambles. Social affairs correspondent Michael Buchanan said:

There are few sectors of the economy that ask so much and pay so little. A requirement for compassion, patience and empathy, while carrying out legally mandated responsibilities is usually rewarded by receiving the minimum wage. Around 16 per cent of England's care workers, about 250,000 people, come from the EU or overseas, 440,000 people leave the care sector annually, a turnover rate of nearly a third. The government wants the industry to move away from being a minimum wage employer, but spending by local authorities is lower in real terms than it was in 2010/11, despite rising demand. Joyce Pinfield owns a home in Somerset and is on the board of the National Care Association.

JOYCE PINFIELD: Until the local authorities actually put up their fees, can we afford to pay our staff? We have to remember, of course, that people are coming into the care sector requiring detailed care, often two-person care. And so we definitely need the income to be able to support paying extra wages.

MB: The ban on care companies seeking employees from abroad will feel to many like further neglect from the government. Repeated broken promises to reform the sector, coupled with incredulity over ministerial claims that they'd put a protective ring around care homes through the pandemic has left the sector exasperated and often demoralised.

### **BBC One News at Six**

6.06pm (post-Brexit immigration): This focused on the social care sector, and Fiona Bruce said it would not cover most people looking for work in social care. Mark Eastern, home affairs correspondent, said that the social work sector, which had been battling on the frontlines of Covid, had been hoping new immigration rules would make it easier to recruit 'desperately needed' staff from overseas, but it had now been confirmed that the fast-track health and care visa would not be available to them. There was a repeat of the quote from care home managing director Raj Seghal where the recruitment pool to fill 122,00 vacancies had been closed. Mr Easton said that social care workers were not paid enough to be classed as skilled workers, and Labour had accused the government of being insulting to care workers. There was a quote from government minister Kevin Foster, said the need was to prioritise jobs in the UK rather recruiting from abroad at the minimum wage. Mr Easton said:

Some had thought the Thursday Clap for Carers might have seen more support for lower paid key workers. The Prime Minister said today he wouldn't slam the door on people who could contribute to the country. But the government's immigration strategy is focussed on attracting high skilled workers, with government migration advisers saying the solution to social care's recruitment problems is to pay British carers a more attractive wage. . . The government's decision to end almost all immigration into low paid jobs in sectors like social care, construction and hospitality will encourage British employers to seek British replacements. And in a period of sharply rising unemployment, that may be easier now than it has been. But in the longer term, it may further complicate the economics of a beleaguered sector that's long complained of being treated as the poor relation of the NHS. Mark Easton, BBC News.

### **BBC One News at Ten**

10.11pm (post-Brexit immigration): This was a repeat of what was said at 6pm.

## Radio 4, The World Tonight

10pm bulletins: These were a distilled-down repeat of the television news report, with the inclusion of the quote from Raj Seghal.

10.07pm (Polish election): Ritulah Shah commented that the Polish presidential election had 'played on deep divisions with the country, with Andrzej Duda securing a narrow victory with 51.2 per cent of the votes. Ms Shah said that during the election Mr Duda had suggested that LGBT rights were an ideology more destructive than communism, and had accused his opponent of serving foreign interests rather than those of Poland. Bart Staszewski, an 'LGBT activist' in Poland and a member of the opposition party Civic Platform, said that in future gay couples would not be allowed to become adoptive parents and LGBT people would become second-class citizens. Ms Shah said the victory was the slimmest by a president since 1989 and asked Radoslaw Fogiel, an MP for governing law and justice party if unity would be an issue when almost half the population did not support the president. Mr Fogiel said that divisions had been exaggerated in the election. Ms Shah said Mr Duda's policies were more socially conservative and religious than his opponent, standing for very different sets of values. . Mr Fogiel said they were different, but that the election was now over and the need was to live together. Ms Shah asked if Poland was safe for gay people. Mr Fogiel said it was absolutely safe and that gay people enjoyed the same rights as others. Ms Shah replied that MEPs had claimed the independence of the judiciary was under attack, and asked whether this put Poland on a collision course with the EU. Mr Fogiel suggested that judicial review was much needed to make it more just and open, and asserted that issues of justice were internal ones and not the province of the EU. Ms Shah claimed that all EU member states had to have an independent judiciary. Mr Fogiel said his country was very happy to be a member of the EU, but there was an anger that Brussels bureaucrats were trying to decide things they shouldn't.

Ms Shah then spoke to Dutch MEP Sophie in 't Veld, who sat on the parliamentary civil liberties, justice and home affairs committee, and suggested that Mr Duda had claimed the EU was a threat to national harmony. Ms in 't Veld said Poland had signed up to the EU treaties and claimed the judicial reforms were actually 'state capture' of the judicial system. Those opposed to the changes included neutral judges. She further claimed that they were violating EU treaties and opponents were being silenced, coupled with homophobic and anti-Semitic undertones. Mr Shah suggested the EU could not do anything. Ms in 't Veld said member states were concerned and a sanctions procedure had been initiated. Ms Shah suggested there could be five years of tension.

10.17am (post-Brexit immigration policy): Ritulah Shah outlined the basics of the new immigration policy and said there were concerns that the provisions excluded social care workers, with the government hoping Britons would fill the shortfall, which one in six workers. Caroline Abrahams said that asking the social care sector to do without EU workers was like kicking a dog when it was down. It was fair enough in the long term to train British workers but it would take time and there were currently 122,000 vacancies. Conservative MP Philip Dunne, a former health minister, said the key was that the care sector

should provide training and find individuals prepared to work in social care. Ms Shah asked whether a sector which had suffered as a result of Covid-19 could do that. Mr Dunne said there were good training programmes, and it took only about three months to train people to work in the sector. Ms Shah asked if there would be a change in policy if vacancies remained high. Mr Dunne said it was likely if vacancy rates grew. But the government was putting more money into the sector and the challenge was to provide the necessary training. Ms Shah asked whether, if there were gaps in provision, this could backfire politically. Mr Dunne thought not. He also noted that nursing applications had risen.