

# Theresa May given 24-hour deadline to say when she will quit

EXCLUSIVE: Senior Tories warn PM to give clear timetable for handover date or risk being forced out by rebellion.



Theresa May leaves Parliament following talks with Jeremy Corbyn on Tuesday night ( Aaron Chown/PA )

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Theresa May was served a deadline of 24 hours by senior Tory MPs today to clarify when she will leave office, or risk being forced out by a rebellion of MPs and activists.

Members of the 1922 Committee executive, the party heavyweights who represent Tory backbenchers, said they were not satisfied with the Prime Minister's latest attempt to delay her departure to late July so she can have another try at getting MPs to pass her thrice-rejected Brexit deal.

“We need a clear timetable from the Prime Minister as to what point she will be stepping down and we will elect a new leader,” said Bob Blackman, an executive member and MP for Harrow West.

Another executive member, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, told the Standard: “The problem of the hand-over date for the Prime Minister needs to be resolved sooner rather than later. Every week that uncertainty goes on is bad for the country and disastrous for the Conservative Party.



Campaign trail: Change UK's Jessica Simor, MP Mike Gapes, Karen Newman, Annabel Mullin, Jan Vincent-Rostowski, Carol Tongue, Gavin Esler and Nora Mulready. Esler says his party are being targeted by the “Leave troll factory” (NIGEL HOWARD)

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“She has had almost three years to negotiate this deal. Sadly, it is now time to hand over the reins to someone else with fresh ideas and the moral authority to lead the party.”

Sir Geoffrey added: “It would be infinitely preferable that the Prime Minister should set out this timetable herself rather than face the prospect of a vote of no

confidence in her either by her parliamentary colleagues or by association chairs.”

The comments from the MPs make clear that Tories are not satisfied with the package Mrs May took to the Cabinet yesterday, which gave a strong signal that she intends to resign by the end of July if her deal is passed.

Privately, Tories are demanding a fixed timetable, including a pledge to go if her deal is shot down again, and an early start to a leadership contest so her successor has time for a Cabinet reshuffle and to prepare new policies for conference speeches.

MPs think a critical week will see the introduction of the delayed Withdrawal Agreement Bill on June 4, a vote on the Bill on June 5, and the Peterborough by-election on June 6. On June 12, it will be six months since the December vote of confidence which Mrs May won, and the 1922 Committee could vote on whether to change the rules to allow another. At the last such vote, it was defeated by a margin of two but at least one member has changed their mind. On June 15, members of the National Conservative Convention, which represents local party officials, will vote in an emergency meeting on whether to change the rules.

Nigel Evans, another executive member of the “22”, wrote on ConHome that Mrs May must show leadership and say when she is going: “My message to Theresa May is straightforward: the existential threat to my party is so real that every day of continued dithering and delay means that the bad place we are in becomes worse, and her successor will be handed a mission impossible of a job.”

Mrs May and Jeremy Corbyn held fresh talks last night, fuelling speculation the Bill could be a vehicle for cross-party co-operation, or even a deal. But the DUP’s Nigel Dodds predicted it was “highly likely” that it would be defeated a fourth time and Labour sources said they had not agreed any deal.

Former Brexit minister Steve Baker said: “Driving it through over the heads of the DUP appears to eradicate the Government’s majority. What is the Government thinking?”

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox served another warning today that Britain retaining a customs union with the EU would be a “major disincentive” to trade globally.

He said in a speech to the Institute for Government: “There would be a major disincentive for other countries to want to negotiate with us in a period where they didn’t know when the end of our customs union with the European Union would be and it’s likely, therefore, we would delay those discussions. That’s not something I want to see.”

## **Change team on poll war footing ... but voters need convincing**

### **Election Focus**

In A north London gastro-pub, Britain’s newest political party is gathered over glasses of wine to discuss the European elections.

There’s “vegan fish and chips” on the menu of the Old Dairy in trendy Stroud Green. Around the room conversation is flowing as 20 or so volunteers and three election candidates talk enthusiastically. They are almost all disgruntled ex-Labour stalwarts looking for a new future that has Europe at its heart.

Welcome to Change UK, the party co-founded by Chuka Umunna which hopes the May 23 elections will provide a breakthrough moment. “The mainstream has become stranded in the wilderness,” said first-time MEP candidate Nora Mulready, who quit Labour after 20 years in January last year.

Carole Tongue, a former Labour MEP and deputy leader of the European Labour Party, said she jumped ship six weeks ago because Jeremy Corbyn has obliterated any pro-European sentiment Labour had.

“You’re looking at a woman who worked to ensure that Labour was a pro-EU party from 1984 to 1999,” she said. Spirits are high. They are clear what they stand for. But will the public embrace this bid to break the mould? One poll yesterday had the party as low as one per cent, and analyst Peter Kellner asks in a blog: “Has Change UK blown it?”

Wimbledon, an area that voted 62 per cent Remain, could be fertile ground for Change UK. Staff at Creams British Luxury cafe said they knew about the party but were divided on whether it would get their vote. James Hall, 20, from Ireland, said voting for a united Europe is a priority, adding: “I will look more into Change



UK." Colleague Shaun Bushby, 21, said: "It's healthier for politics to have two new parties on the scene, the Brexit Party and Change UK. If Change UK does well at the EU election it will be interesting to see what their agenda is."

But lawyer Sarah Prickett, 32, said: "I will probably vote but I don't know who for. I don't feel very enthusiastic." She did not know much about Change UK but her friend Nicky Tibbs, 30, a teacher, interrupted: "That's Chuka's party. I'm not especially interested in it."

David Kugler, 27, who was born in Hungary but has British citizenship, said: "I was thinking more of Labour."

Sue Page, who works at pet store Creature Company, voted Leave in 2016 and may not vote next week because she has no faith anyone will listen. "I'm in two minds," she said. "A lot of people don't know what it will achieve."

She too admitted she did not really know about Change UK. Polls suggest the party is losing ground to the Liberal Democrats and the Greens.

Gavin Esler, the former BBC presenter, is one of the big guns that Change UK hopes will wake up the voters. "I was born in a council house and I know the Nigels, Borises and Rees-Moggs weren't," said Esler, who grew up in Glasgow and is frustrated that Brexiteers like Nigel Farage pose as "real people" against a Remain elite. "The Leave troll factory has been attacking us, but they wouldn't if we weren't relevant. They wouldn't be trying to strangle us at birth."

By Kate Proctor

Asked if a vote was another "throw of the dice", he said that if MPs voted down Mrs May's deal Britain would head either for a no-deal exit or for the cancellation of Brexit.

He added: "Yes, there'll be an opportunity for MPs to decide ... whether they want to vote for Brexit or not. I think MPs will have to look and see whether they want to continue down a path inexorably that takes us either to the potential of revocation of Article 50 or leaving without a deal and asking whether that's the best course democratically or economically for the UK? MPs will have to face that decision."

He said MPs would "have to face the political consequences of failing to carry out

their part of the bargain” if Brexit was stopped.

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Source:

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-may-given-24hour-deadline-to-say-when-she-will-quit-a4142761.html>

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