

Jane Riekemann: 3-minute speech

I'm here as a Bath resident to ask the council to publicly support a People's Vote on the final terms of any Brexit deal and to include the option to remain. This should then be put into writing and sent to the PM, the MPS for Bath and N.E Somerset and the Sec of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It's been 2 ½ years since the referendum and it's evident that all of us - Leavers and Remainers – now know more about what impact Brexit could have on our lives. In 2016 we were told by Dr Liam Fox that the Free Trade Agreement with the EU should be the easiest in human history. Nothing about Brexit has proved easy - clearly the current impasse over the Northern Irish border hadn't been considered – and with only 140 days to go we run a significant risk of crashing out of the EU without a deal – despite briefings that the govt might be nearing one. The government and NHS's impact assessments have shown Brexit in all its forms is just damage limitation with NO Deal being the most disastrous, resulting in instructions about stockpiling food and medicines - as if we were in a natural emergency as opposed to a man-made one.

And how would this impact our community? What assessments have been done for Bath and North East Somerset? For example, one of BANES's highest budget priorities is social care. Currently, there is a national shortage of care staff so to lose a potential 5.9% of EU workers would be catastrophic. According to CIFPA (the Chartered Institute of Public finance and Accountancy), the southwest could be hit harder economically than many other regions of the UK, not just because of the high number of EU workers in the aerospace and automotive sector, but because many of those industries have spoken publicly about leaving the UK in the event of a hard Brexit that would interrupt their supply chains. We're keen to attract tourists to the South West and traditionally 1.5 million come each year, but dealing with clogged ferry ports, additional visas and grounded planes will turn us into a country of chaos. And vital medicines such as insulin for diabetics or isotopes for radiotherapy and scans could be delayed or in short supply.

No wonder people are taking action. A You Gov Poll in August this year found an overwhelming majority in the South West supported a People's Vote, with 67% of under 25's favouring staying in the EU - which they see as their right and their future. On October 20th, 700,000 converged on the capital, in the 2nd biggest protest march this century. There is cross-party consensus among MPs for an amendment to the Brexit bill to include a public vote; business leaders and several councils have also called for one. So, please Bath and N.E.Somerset, do likewise for the future of the next generation.

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Sources:

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