# Richard Tice condemns Keir Starmer's Brexit renegotiation as political theatre amid rising populist gains



Richard Tice, the Deputy Leader of a burgeoning political movement, has sharply denounced Sir Keir Starmer's recent initiative aimed at renegotiating Brexit, dismissing it as mere political theatrics designed to solidify ties with an economically stagnant EU. Tice’s vehement critique follows notable electoral gains that highlight a rising disillusionment among voters, who see the current administration as neglecting the country's pressing economic needs.

In an interview with Sky News, Tice criticised the proposed deal as misaligned with the will of the British people, asserting that it would undermine the benefits won through Brexit. He ominously warned that such an agreement could lead to restrictive trade regulations, diminished youth mobility, and serious limitations on fishing rights, which he branded as “major capitulations.” Instead, he argues for a vision where the UK firmly turns its back on the EU and embraces robust global trade opportunities, while eliminating what he describes as “absurd EU red tape.”

The recent performance of Tice's movement in local elections has further cemented its political influence, albeit while acknowledging it currently controls only a modest number of councils. What’s noteworthy is its expected representation in Local Government Pension Schemes, which could oversee assets exceeding £100 billion. With influence ranging from outright control in Lincolnshire County Council to significant roles in multi-council schemes like South Yorkshire, the movement has pledged to scrutinise “woke investments,” setting the stage for potential conflicts over environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies.

Amidst the backdrop of significant health and socioeconomic disparities throughout the UK, particularly in regions traditionally loyal to Labour, there emerges a clear link between these inequalities and the uptick in support for populist alternatives. Regions like the North East and Lincolnshire are grappling with declining living standards and spiking mortality rates among working-age individuals, often attributed to the failures of austerity and deindustrialisation. This climate has given rise to a political landscape eager for change, with constituents looking for parties willing to confront their urgent challenges head-on.

The rise of this populist alternative is juxtaposed with a declining fortune for Starmer, who is facing backlash for moving Labour’s policies towards the right, particularly around welfare and immigration. Polling trends show plummeting approval ratings among his core base—a stark reaction to controversial measures like cuts to international aid and more restrictive welfare policies. As the alternative movement gains momentum in national polls, the erosion of faith in Labour’s leadership becomes increasingly apparent.

Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Conservative Party, has begun to recognize the threat posed by this rising movement, amending her political approach to focus squarely on economic issues in hopes of recapturing disenchanted voters. Previously obsessed with immigration and culture, the Conservatives find these messages falling flat with the public. Badenoch’s emphasis on robust economic policies embodies a growing recognition that resonating with voters requires a pivot toward pragmatic economic solutions.

As the political arena grows more contentious, with Starmer identifying this populist movement as his chief opponent, the stakes have never been higher for effective governance that truly resonates with public sentiment. This crisis not only challenges Labour but also puts the entire political establishment on notice, as established parties scramble to adapt to the swiftly shifting demands of a dissatisfied electorate.

The interplay of economic struggles, health crises, and social issues represents a pivotal moment in British politics, with the rise of populism serving as a clarion call for traditional parties to reevaluate their strategies. As this emerging force positions itself as a credible alternative, the question remains: how will the established parties recalibrate their agendas to engage a population keen for meaningful change?

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/brexit-reset-starmer-deal-tice-recession-b2753748.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/4922d15c-7176-479a-987a-f8d412f24b42> - Following Reform UK's gains in the May 1st local elections, the party has secured a notable foothold in the governance of Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS). Although they won control of only ten councils, their representation extends further; they are expected to gain seats on the pensions committees of 18 administering authorities, overseeing over £100bn in assets. Of these, Reform UK is projected to have majority control in four authorities, controlling £29.2bn, and a controlling plurality in another five, overseeing £25.4bn. Their influence ranges from full control, as in Lincolnshire County Council, to limited representation in multi-council schemes like the South Yorkshire Pension Authority. The article analyses these dynamics using public governance data and estimates from LGPS reports, highlighting how electoral gains have translated into real influence over public pension fund decisions. The future impact of this shift remains uncertain, but Reform UK’s promises to scrutinize "woke investments" suggest potential policy clashes.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/45940b3a-1f69-4784-a55e-9124276e0d93> - The article, written by the chief executive of the Health Foundation think-tank, explores the strong correlation between health inequality in England and support for Reform UK, particularly in regions like the North East, Lincolnshire, and parts of Kent and Essex. It highlights how decades of economic and social decline—stemming from deindustrialisation, austerity, and stagnant living standards—have eroded community health and trust in government. Life expectancy has stalled since 2011, and mortality among working-age adults is rising, particularly from "deaths of despair" such as suicide, drug use, and alcohol-related causes. These health disparities contribute to political unrest, with voters in deprived areas increasingly supporting populist movements that claim to address their concerns. Past governmental initiatives for community regeneration have shown some success when consistently funded and implemented, but overall political engagement has been sporadic. The current government’s £1.5 billion plan targeting 75 disadvantaged areas is a welcome step. The article argues Labour must broaden its health strategy beyond the NHS to address the social determinants of health, such as housing and employment, through neighborhood health centres. Public support for a more proactive state in tackling root causes is growing, making it imperative for political leaders to address health inequality to regain trust.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/05bcd5ca-fbf2-4728-be1a-84b747ec30ed> - Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch is shifting her political strategy to focus more on the economy, aiming to counter the growing threat from Nigel Farage's Reform UK. Despite her previous emphasis on immigration and "woke" issues, recent election losses and poor polling suggest these themes have not resonated with voters. Senior Tories believe the economy is a weak spot for both Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and Reform UK, offering the Conservatives a potential advantage. Badenoch highlighted economic issues during Prime Minister’s Questions, criticizing Labour’s national insurance plans and downplaying their trade achievements. There is growing pressure within the Conservative Party to introduce strong, relatable economic policies to appeal to voters, especially following a poor performance in the May 1 local elections. While Badenoch’s team insists she has long prioritized economic messages, critics argue she needs to emphasize her party’s fiscal responsibility more clearly. Polls show mixed results, with some suggesting Reform UK is ahead in economic trust. Nonetheless, Conservatives believe economic credibility remains their best opportunity to regain support and counter Reform UK's rise. Former chancellor George Osborne also called for more focus on fiscal policies over culture war issues.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/659406e7-552c-4e10-83a0-0adebb5ad838> - Sir Keir Starmer’s popularity has plummeted to its lowest point according to new YouGov polling, especially among Labour voters. Once enjoying a 62% favorable rating within his party, that number has fallen to 45%, marking his first net negative rating among core supporters. Analysts attribute the decline to Starmer’s shift to the political right, with controversial moves including cuts to international aid, stricter welfare reforms, and new immigration restrictions. A recent speech drew criticism for echoing divisive historical rhetoric, fueling further internal dissent—evident in a private letter signed by over 100 Labour MPs calling for policy revisions. Concurrently, Nigel Farage's Reform UK is gaining momentum, surpassing Labour in national polls with 29% support compared to Labour’s 23%, and the Conservatives’ 18%. Overall, Starmer's national net favorability now stands at -46, while Farage, despite still being largely unpopular, has improved his standing to a -27 net rating. These developments come amid anticipated tightening of public spending in the upcoming review and growing unease within the Parliamentary Labour Party.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/d7858718-91a9-4881-baa6-10dc7c05a260> - Reform UK's breakthrough in the May 2025 UK local elections has granted the populist party significant influence over more than £100bn of local government pension assets via control of key pensions committees. Traditionally considered a low-profile area, these committees wield substantial power over fund strategies, asset allocations, and manager appointments. Reform UK, led by figures such as Richard Tice, is campaigning against "woke" ESG and net-zero-focused investments, criticizing their perceived underperformance. Their critique echoes moves in the U.S., where conservative political backlash has influenced public pension investment strategies, particularly around ESG. Despite criticism, some of these so-called “woke” investments, like the BlackRock Low Carbon Fund, have actually outperformed benchmarks. However, Tice remains skeptical and is pushing for vigilance in reviewing investment performance. With UK government plans to pool investments further and potentially reduce local committee authority, the current Reform influence could be short-lived. Yet, given that pooling firms remain accountable to their local authority clients, Reform councillors' influence may persist. This development could significantly impact the UK asset management industry's approach to ESG and net-zero investing, mirroring the politicization seen in the U.S. and potentially causing a chilling effect across the sector.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/087f35aa-6d0b-49ec-af6c-9b30b87d787d> - UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer now identifies Nigel Farage's Reform UK as his primary political opponent amid rising support for the party and waning Conservative influence. Starmer believes a major political realignment is underway, referring to the Conservatives under Kemi Badenoch as nearing "the end of the road." Public opinion polls confirm this shift, showing Reform UK ahead of both the Conservatives and Labour. Despite mounting criticism from within his party over welfare cuts and his tough rhetoric on migration, Starmer continues to push his agenda. He recently visited Albania to firm up his migration policy ahead of next week's EU-UK summit. Starmer is also proposing "returns hubs" for failed asylum seekers, though Albania has declined involvement. Farage, capitalizing on record-high small boat crossings and the government's inability to curb illegal migration, has called for a national emergency. Starmer's approval ratings continue to decline sharply, especially among Labour voters, despite his attempts to refocus political debate around migration and economic control. His warnings about the increasing threat from Farage underscore concerns about the efficacy of his strategies and the challenge of converting political messaging into tangible results.