Exclusive: Nigel Farage to relaunch Brexit Party as Reform UK, a new anti-lockdown platform

Mr Farage and Mr Tiee declare ‘lockdowns don’t work’, and say their new party will back a policy of ‘focused protection’ from coronavirus.

The Brexit Party is to be relaunched as an anti-lockdown party called Reform UK, Nigel Farage and Richard Tice will announce on Monday, in a move which could alarm libertarian Conservative MPs.

In a joint article for Monday’s Telegraph, Mr Farage and Mr Tiee declare that “lockdowns don’t work”, and say their new party will back a policy of “focused protection from coronavirus” only for the most vulnerable, to allow the rest of the population to develop herd immunity.

The plan to change the name of the Brexit Party to Reform UK is subject to approval of the Electoral Commission. Papers were submitted to the regulator last week.

Reform UK hopes to stand a slate of candidates at May’s elections – where the Tories are contesting thousands of share seats, as well as policing and crime commissioner elections – and the next general election, expected by 2024.

The news will worry Conservative MPs, scarred by the way Mr Farage’s previous Eurosceptic party – the UK Independence Party and the Brexit Party – proved a support for the Tory party at previous elections.

The Brexit Party – which won 10 seats in last year’s European Parliament elections 10 weeks after it was set up – claimed it had 100,000 ‘registered supporters’ at its peak, although a number are understood to be false. Hundreds of thousands of pounds has been said to have been pledged for the re-branded party.

Mr Farage said he was expected to find support among people whose businesses have been unable to be saved by the lockdowns, such as the self-employed, restaurant owners and others in the hospitality industry.

He said: “We feel there is a massive political hole at the moment. The crisis has shown how much we must be free – everywhere from our responses to the COVID, we have wasted on track and trade, to being from the most hideous compulsory, to illegal immigration where we tough talk and nothing ever happens.

“The whole system of governance in the UK is not working, and is therefore in need of very deep reform. Brexit is about making us free, but beyond Brexit we have to be governed better. Brexit is the beginning of what we need. Brexit gives us self-governance – we now need to have local self-governance.”

In a joint article for the Telegraph, Mr Farage, the Brexit Party leader, and Mr Tice, the party’s chairman, made clear that the new party’s focus over the next few months will be fighting lockdown measures.

They say: “Lockdowns don’t work. In fact, they cause more harm than good. But there is a credible alternative, recommended by some of the finest epidemiologists and medics in the world. It is the Great Barrington Declaration. It is effectively being practised to a large degree in Sweden, with considerable success.

“Focused protection is the key, targeting resources at those most at risk: the elderly, vulnerable or those with other medical conditions. Many of them of course would prefer to keep their grand children and enjoy a family Christmas with loved ones, which should not be criminalised for the simple acts that make life worth living, particularly in the final year.

“The rest of the population should, with high hygiene measures and a dose of common sense, get on with life. This is what we build immunity in the population. The young act as warriors, creating a shield of protection. Multi-generational households will be needed to implement extraordinary measures.”

They add: “Every death is a huge loss for family, friends and loved ones. But we must put Covid-related deaths into perspective. Around 1,600 people die every day in the UK, for some reason or another.

“The average age of a coronavirus’ finishers is 82 years older than average life expectancy. The truth is this horrific disease is only very dangerous for a tiny minority of people.

“The average person has less than a 0.03 per cent chance of surviving the disease if they catch it. We must have the courage to look at the virus, and take it for what it is.”

The party will back the Great Barrington Declaration, a policy backed by hundreds of scientists and doctors, who advocates only requiring the elderly and most vulnerable to lock down.

The pair add: “Brexit is the only significant political party that supports the Great Barrington Declaration. We are showing the courage needed to take on consensus thinking and vested interests on Covid.

“But there are so many areas of public life that can be improved to benefit ordinary people. That is why we will campaign for Brexit.”

On Sunday night a spokesman for the Electoral Commission said: “The Brexit Party has submitted the application to change its name to Reform UK. If we are satisfied the application contains all of the information required by it, it will be published online. The application has yet to be assessed, this may take up to six weeks.

“Applications to register a new political party are subject to detailed assessment against the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.”