

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

Mr Farage and Mr Tice declare 'lockdowns don't work', and say their new party will back a policy of 'focused protection' from coronavirus

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Nigel Farage and Brexit Party Chairman Richard Tice (L): their party will back the Great Barrington Declaration, a policy backed by thousands of scientists and doctors, which advocates only requiring the elderly and most vulnerable to lock down | CREDIT: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images Europe

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 Tice 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 plans to change the name of the Brexit Party to Reform UK are 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 - when the Tories are contesting thousands of shire 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 that Mr Farage's previous Eurosceptic parties - the UK Independence Party and the Brexit Party - sapped support for the Tory party at previous elections.

The Brexit Party - which won 29 seats in last year's European Parliament elections 10 weeks after it was set up - claimed to have 150,000 'registered supporters' at its peak, although numbers are understood to have fallen to tens of thousands since then. Hundreds of thousands of pounds has been said to have been pledged for the re-badged party.

Mr Farage said he expected to [find support among people whose businesses have been adversely affected](#) by the lockdown, such as the self-employed, restaurateurs and others in the hospitality industry.

He said: "We feel there is a massive political hole at the moment. The crisis has shown how badly governed we are - everything from our quangoes to the £12bn we have wasted on track and trace, to firms being given the most ludicrous contracts, to illegal immigration where we tough talk and nothing ever happens.

"The whole system of government in the UK is not working, and is therefore in need of very radical 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 good self-governance."

In a joint article for the Telegraph, Mr Farage, the Brexit Party leader, and Mr Tice, the party's chairman, make 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 hug their grandchildren and enjoy a family Christmas with loved ones. They should not be criminalised for the simple acts that make life worth living, particularly in their final years.

"The rest of the population should, with good hygiene measures and a dose of common sense, get on with life. This way we build immunity in the population. The young act as warriors, creating a shield of protection. Multi generational households will of course need to implement stricter 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 other.

"The average age of a coronavirus fatality is 82: older than average life expectancy. The truth is this horrible illness is only very dangerous for a tiny minority of people.

"The average person has more than a 99.5 per cent chance of surviving the disease if they catch it. We must have the courage to live with the virus, not hide in fear of it."

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

The pair add: "Reform 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 Reform."

On Sunday night a spokesman for the Electoral Commission said: "The Brexit Party has submitted an application to change its name to 'Reform UK'. If we are satisfied the application contains all of the information required by law, 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 name are subject to detailed assessment against the criteria set out in law. When we receive an application to register a new party name, the details of the new name are published online so members of the public can input their views."