



Ursuline High School Sixth Form Conference
Thursday 15 January 2026





WELCOME

Welcome to our conference today in which we will look at the theme of "Brexit Britain: 10 years on". This year, on 23 June 2026, is the 10 year anniversary of the historic referendum on whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. The referendum had been an election promise of the Conservative party, propelled to the forefront of the UK's political agenda by the rising popularity of Nigel Farage's UKIP party and by Euro-sceptics within the Government itself. The referendum divided the UK with schisms and factions forming within the different political parties and across families and communities, and across the different nation states (most notably Scotland who had only recently had their own referendum on independence, the result of which- from some perspectives- was then compounded by Brexit). The outcome was close (51.9% of the vote was Leave), with all regions in England and Wales, except London, voting to leave and Scotland and Northern Ireland voting to remain.

In today's conference, we are looking at the reasons for the Brexit vote- the views on both sides which fuelled the debate, and reflecting on the legacy of Brexit on Britain today. We will ask students to reflect on the face of Politics, its changing forum from discussion on the doorstep to debates on social media, the rise of far right politics both here and globally, the Economic case for and against Brexit, and how to address some of the issues which first brought Euroscepticism to the foreground (questions over sovereignty, national identity, immigration, and the Economy).

We are very fortunate to be joined by a wonderful panel of speakers. To discuss Brexit Britain, what led up to the referendum, how it was put into effect, and the legacy it has had, we are joined by [seven] different speakers. We are delighted to be joined by Siobhain McDonagh MP (Mitcham and Morden) who is the MP for many of our students and has long supported this conference. Paul Kohler MP (Wimbledon) was sadly unable to join us and has sent us his apologies. We also have Quentin Peel, journalist, formerly with the Financial Times, Alfred Quantrill from the Young European Movement, Darius Nasimi from the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association and Alka Seghal Cuthbert who stood for the Brexit Party. They will share their own reflections on Brexit and its impact.

In session four we hear from Jonathan Gifford who is a media, crisis and strategic communications expert in the UK Government and who will lead a crisis activity to give the students a taste of what it is like to work at a governmental level in crisis management. He has worked in three of the world's top global PR businesses and for the largest lobbying company in the UK. Within Government he has worked across many different departments from trade to health. He will lead the students in an activity of crisis management.

We will end with a debate on whether the UK should have a referendum on rejoining the EU. Well done to Catherine, Maia, Zara and Olivier for leading on this!

I would like to thank all our speakers for giving their time today. Your commitment to the students here today and lasting impact of your service today is really valued and important. We thank too John Carroll for chairing, and TEAM Global and the IEA for their generous support of the day.

We are delighted to be joined by Mulberry School for Girls, Raynes Park High, Ricards and Rutlish, St Philomena's, Wimbledon College, and our sister Ursuline school in Ilford-the UAI, and hope you all gain a great deal from today. Thank you for coming!

Eoin Kelly

Headteacher
Ursuline High School
Wimbledon





PROGRAMME

9.20am	Registration
9.40am	Welcome: Mr Kelly to open the conference
9.45am	Student introduction and quiz
9.55am	Session 1: Panel discussion on Brexit Britain- its build up, execution, and legacy. Siobhain McDonagh (Labour- Mitcham and Morden), Dr Alka Seghal Cuthbert (formerly of the Brexit Party), Quentin Peel (Financial Times), Darius Nasimi (Afghanistan and Central Asia Association) and Alfred Quantrill (President of the Young European Movement).
11.00am	Break
11.20am	Session 2: IEA “A critical look at the impact of Brexit on the Economy and on Labour Markets”. Dr Stephen David and Professor Len Shackleton (both IEA).
12.05pm	Lunch
12.40pm	Session 3: “The role of the media in Brexit in 2016 and now”. Reem Ibrahim (IEA).
1.10pm	Session 4: Crisis activity. Jonathan Gifford (Communications expert for the UK Government).
1.45pm	Debate: “This House believes that the UK should have a referendum on rejoining the EU”. Catherine Banks and Zara Ivanova (for the motion) and Maia Heward Mills and Olivier Chudzik (against the motion).
2.10pm	Reflection and evaluation
2.20pm	End of the conference

OUR SPEAKERS

Session 1: The panel



Siobhain McDonagh has been the Labour Member of Parliament for Mitcham and Morden for the past 25 years – the constituency in which she was born and still lives to this day.

**Siobhain
McDonagh**



**Dr Alka Sehgal
Cuthbert**

Dr Alka Sehgal Cuthbert is an educator, academic, author and campaigner who believes passionately in the essential importance of impartiality both in education and as a prerequisite for the civilised conversations necessary for democracy to flourish. Alka became director of Don't Divide Us following two years as its founder lead on education. She is the lead researcher of DDU's three landmark reports, the latest being 'The Equalities Act Isn't Working: Equalities Legislation and the Breakdown of Informal Civility in the Workplace.' The report was covered widely in the mainstream press and is seminal in opening a public conversation on today's understanding, and use, of equalities legislation. Dr Sehgal Cuthbert stood for the Brexit Party in 2017.



Alfred Quantrill

Alfred Quantrill is the president of Young European Movement UK and a Philosophy student at Bristol University. Alfred serves on the Youth Advisory Committee for the European Union Delegation to the UK, advising on their policy towards engaging young people in the project of building EU-UK relations. Alfred is currently leading YEM's campaign, 'Open doors, Open futures,' focused on arguing for an extensive Youth Experience Scheme, and a full return to membership of Erasmus+.

OUR SPEAKERS



Darius Nasimi

Darius Nasimi was four months old when his family fled Afghanistan to escape the Taliban in 1999. Darius was brought up in South East London and graduated in 2021 from Kings' College, University of London with a BA in Philosophy. Whilst studying, he founded the Institute for Central Asian Studies (ICAS). Since 2018, Darius has been Head of Funding and Partnerships at the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA), a charity founded by his father in 2000 to support refugee integration in the UK. In 2021, Darius Nasimi was elected the first National Secretary of the Counter Terrorism Advisory Group, managed by Metropolitan Police and was previously a Trustee of the Heathrow Communities Trust. In May 2022, Darius Nasimi was the first British Afghan to stand as a Conservative Candidate in the 2022 UK local elections for Hanworth Village, winning over 1400 votes and doubling the number of voters for the Conservative Party. In 2023, Darius founded the UK-Central Asia Business Council and is currently co-founder of Suzani Capital aimed at increasing bilateral trade between UK and Central Asia. In January 2025, Darius launched the Afghanistan Government in Exile and the Campaign for the Democratic Government in Afghanistan to be the voice of the people of Afghanistan.



Quentin Peel

Quentin Peel is a journalist who worked as a foreign correspondent for the Financial Times in Africa and Europe. He became foreign editor of the newspaper in 1994. His various postings included Moscow, Berlin, Bonn, Brussels and Johannesburg, and he was also Africa editor in the 1980s. After retiring from the FT in 2014, he became a senior fellow with the Europe programme at the think tank Chatham House. He is a regular broadcaster on international affairs on radio and television, including CNN, France24 and Deutsche Welle, as well as the BBC and Monocle Radio.

OUR SPEAKERS

Session 2



Dr Steve Davies

Dr Steve Davies is the Senior Education Fellow at the IEA. Previously he was program officer at the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) at George Mason University in Virginia. He joined IHS from the UK where he was Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and Economic History at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has also been a Visiting Scholar at the Social Philosophy and Policy Center at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. A historian, he graduated from St Andrews University in Scotland in 1976 and gained his PhD from the same institution in 1984. He has authored several books, including *Empiricism and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and was co-editor with Nigel Ashford of *The Dictionary of Conservative and Libertarian Thought* (Routledge, 1991).



Professor Len Shackleton

Professor Len Shackleton is an Editorial and Research Fellow at the IEA and Professor of Economics at the University of Buckingham. He was previously Dean of the Royal Docks Business School at the University of East London and prior to that was Dean of the Westminster Business School. He has also taught at Queen Mary, University of London and worked as an economist in the Civil Service. His research interests are primarily in the economics of labour markets. He has worked with many think tanks, most closely with the Institute of Economic Affairs, where he is an Economics Fellow. He edits the journal *Economic Affairs*, which is co-published by the IEA and the University of Buckingham.

Session 3



Reem Ibrahim

Reem Ibrahim is the Head of Media and Linda Whetstone Scholar at the Institute of Economic Affairs. She regularly appears on television and radio, including the BBC, LBC, GB News, TalkTV and more, and has written for various national press including the Telegraph, the Spectator, CityAM, the Express and others. Reem has a particular interest in consumer choice, and is the co-author of "A Vapid Solution: Why a ban on disposable vapes would be a failure of law enforcement". Reem is a graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

OUR SPEAKERS & CHAIR

Session 4



Jonathan Gifford

Jonathan is a media, crisis and strategic communications expert in the UK Government. He helps allied Governments from Poland to Fiji with their fight against disinformation, and building their communications capabilities. Before government, Jonathan worked in three of the world's top 50 Public Relations businesses, and the largest lobbying company in the UK, helping businesses from Royal Mail to startups with communications campaigns. Within government, he has worked on everything from post-Brexit trade comms in the Department for International Trade to asking the public to lockdown during the pandemic in the Department for Health, and from the collapse of Afghanistan to the deployment of Carrier Strike Groups in the Ministry of Defence.



John Carroll
CHAIR

John D. Carroll enjoyed a long career as an international security and investigations consultant, advising hundreds of major corporations, consulting firms, and government agencies. His specialties included corruption and fraud investigations, kidnapping, threats and extortion by terrorist groups and criminal gangs, primarily in Latin America. A US and Irish citizen, he speaks fluent Spanish and Portuguese. He is a graduate of Brown University, and serves as president of the Brown Club UK, as well as a volunteer with TEAM Global.

Charity Donation



All our speakers have kindly agreed that we can make a donation to charity in honour of their time with us. The charity we are supporting is that of the ACAA which works with refugees and asylum seekers. To learn more about their work, please take a look at the charity website for more details:

www.acaa.org.uk/our-work/refugee-aid



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO...

All our student leaders today.

The conference was planned and led with the help of our wonderful sixth-formers. Thank you to Michelle Kyeyune for designing the conference poster, and to our year 12 Politics students who helped in different ways- to Catherine Banks, Maia Heward Mills, Olivier Chudzik and Zara Ivanova who led the debate, to Eimi Murillo, Shaila Calderon and Emily Da Lux Coixao, who helped present and lead the day, Rachel Moore who prepared the quiz and Martha Harrison and Lizzy Ryan who helped take questions. You've done a great job!

Our schools for joining us!

- Mulberry School for Girls
- Ricards and Rutlish
- Raynes Park High School
- St Philomena's
- The Ursuline Academy, Ilford
- Wimbledon College

TEAM Global & IEA for supporting this event!

We are jointly sponsored this year by TEAM Global and the Institute for Economic Affairs (the "IEA"). TEAM Global is a long term partner with us in working to provide opportunities for young people to engage with political ideas and debate. And we are delighted too to have worked with the IEA who are keen to support Economics students in their understanding of current Economic issues and possible solutions. Both TEAM Global and the IEA have a wealth of experience and excellent people who have worked with us in planning today.

Thank you both very much for your support.



QUESTIONS FOR SPEAKERS

Session 1:

Session 2:

Session 3:

Session 4:

NOTES FOR DEBATES

