

## Pro-Brexit business leaders take names off campaign list

BY BARRY J WHYTE ON MARCH 28, 2016



Britain will vote on its membership of the European Union on June 23

### **Vote Leave forced to apologise to bosses wrongly included**

A group of British business leaders campaigning for Brexit has apologised to two high profile bosses it claimed supported its cause.

The campaign group, Vote Leave, were forced to publicly state that it had wrongly included Carphone Warehouse co-founder, David Ross, and Phone 4U founder John Caudwell on a list of 250 pro-Brexit business leaders it published on Saturday.

In a clarification, a spokesman said that Ross's inclusion had been an error, while Caudwell had previously supported the campaign but had not agreed to be on the list.

The list still includes some high profile names, like former HSBC chief executive Michael Geoghegan, John Moulton of Better Capital, Tim Martin of pub chain JD Wetherspoon, hotelier Sir Rocco Forte, and Luke Johnson, chairman of continental-style cafe chain Patisserie Valerie.

According to Vote Leave chief executive Matthew Elliott, “With our growing list of business supporters, Vote Leave will make that case that whilst the EU may be good for big multinationals, for smaller businesses it acts as a job destruction regulatory machine.”

Not all business leaders support a vote to leave the EU, however. In a letter to the Times newspaper recently, chief executives from nearly 40 of the FTSE 100 companies endorsed a vote to stay in, while the Confederation of British Industry has said most of its members support remaining.

If British voters opt to leave the European Union it could have a significant impact on the Irish economy, although that outcome has so far been difficult to quantify.

In a statement today, Fine Gael MEP Seán Kelly said a Brexit would severely damage Irish trade, which has been valued at €1 billion a week by the British-Irish Chamber of Commerce.

“There is no doubt that a No vote in the UK’s referendum on EU membership would be negative for Ireland,” Kelly said.

“Aside from the equally crucial political stability in Northern Ireland and along its border with the Republic of Ireland, trading on the island of Ireland would also be dealt a blow. Around €3 billion worth of goods cross the border each year, according to Intertrade Ireland, but that strength of trade depends on the peaceful, soft border that currently exists,” he said.

Kelly also cited a survey by the Irish Exporters Association which showed that 95 per cent of its members believe that Britain should stay in the EU, while 90 per cent of Irish exporters surveyed already trade with Britain.

Kelly is a member of the European Parliament’s International Trade Committee.

Irish people living in Britain will be eligible to vote in the referendum, which will be held on June 23.

