



Ex-UKIP leader and ‘father of Brexit’ dies

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A former leader of the UK Independence Party who was also the party's first MEP in the East of England has died aged 90.

Jeffrey Titford was described by a former colleague as "one of the fathers of Brexit".

Previously an undertaker from Essex, Mr Titford began his political career as a Conservative councillor in Clacton before joining the Referendum Party, which later merged with UKIP, external.

In 1999, he was one of the first UKIP politicians to be elected to the European Parliament in Strasbourg/Brussels.

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Mr Titford was a passionate Euro-sceptic who devoted his retirement to campaigning for Britain to leave the European Union.

"If I can influence anybody into believing, as I do, that the EU is wrong for Britain, I shall have achieved my objective," he told the The Newz in 2008.

That objective was realised in 2016 as the UK voted to leave the EU in a referendum, officially leaving in 2020 after more than three years of political wrangling with the EU and within the UK Parliament.

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He was one of the first to join James Goldsmith's Referendum Party and stood in Harwich in the 1997 general election where he came fourth polling 9% of the vote when the seat was won by Labour's Ivan Henderson.

Two years later, when proportional representation was used for the first time in European Parliament elections in the UK, he stood as a UKIP candidate and became one of eight MEPs representing the new East of England constituency, which included Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

"The polls have said that seven out of 10 people don't want to have anything to do with the Euro [currency] and nearly 50% want to withdraw from the European Union," he said at the time.

"All it needed was a party to stand up for those two principles."

He led the party for almost three years in 2000 and again, briefly, as acting leader in 2010 before Nigel Farage took over in the run-up to the decisive 2016 Brexit poll.

He was highly respected within the party for his calm manner and ability to bring people together and resolve arguments – no mean feat for a party which was regularly beset by infighting.

His former colleague and close friend Stuart Gulleford described Mr Titford as “a visionary and a democrat, who did not believe that EU membership provided a viable future for Britain as an independent, self-governing nation”.

“He was one of the fathers of Brexit,” he said.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR8YYeb4PMk>

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Idol



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