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frankly, misrepresentation.' He claimed rising sea lice infestations were a worldwide problem and blamed it on global warming. 'I can tell you that in the west of Scotland in a significant number of areas the average sea water temperature rose by 15 per cent,' he said. 'That is encouraging sea lice.'

'We want a proper study of the effects of climate change on Scottish aquaculture because, in certain circumstances, we are operating in an entirely different environment to what we had five or even three years ago. We are very much looking forward to putting our points across to the inquiry.'

Mr Landsburgh also disputed the findings of the Norwegian study into wild salmon stocks. He said: 'We are as aware as the S&TCS of the state of wild salmon stocks and have consistently pointed out that scientific research has suggested that any impact of sea lice from farms on wild populations is minimal.'

'It is interesting, however, there is no acknowledgment of the impact of climate change, which is undoubtedly having an effect on wild and farmed fish health across the board.'

The RSPCA admits it was 'saddened and

## 'Find ways to help better manage biological problems'

shocked' by the high mortality rates in an industry it helps to regulate, but confirmed that no RSPCA Assured salmon member has been suspended from the scheme as a result of such problems.

A spokesman stressed that disease outbreaks were 'sadly a reality of any farming system', saying: 'It would be irresponsible for the RSPCA to turn its back on these animals.'

'We don't claim to have all the answers to solving disease challenges and sea lice infestations but we are working with the industry to find ways to help better manage these biological problems.'

She added: 'We firmly believe it is far better for us to be involved in trying to find solutions, than sitting on the sidelines doing nothing to help improve the welfare of salmon.'

The Scottish Government says it will give 'appropriate consideration' to the Norwegian study. Scottish ministers will also be invited to reflect with equal care on the official inquiry as it unfolds over the coming months.

They may have to hold their noses as they do so while opposing factions in the forthcoming salmon wars prepare to kick up a bigger stink than anything seen on Loch Erisort.

# Defiant Hammond forces PM to ditch her Brexit speech

## Concern over May's inability to control Cabinet

By Jason Groves Political Editor

THERESA May has postponed plans for a major speech on Brexit amid continued infighting among her Cabinet.

The Prime Minister was yesterday urged to 'impose her authority' as the Chancellor stepped up his call to pursue a 'middle way' on leaving the EU.

Last night, sources confirmed that a planned speech next month setting out the Government's vision on Brexit had been postponed – and could be scrapped altogether. The decision will add to concern that the Government risks becoming paralysed by divisions over Brexit.

Philip Hammond was slapped down by Downing Street on Thursday after he infuriated pro-Brexit MPs by claiming that leaving the EU would produce only 'very modest' changes.

But the Chancellor brushed aside the reprimand yesterday to speak out again, saying the Government would not be swayed by Brexiteers or Remainers.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Mr Hammond said: 'The smaller the changes that happen to our access to markets and the frictions at the borders the better. We have to stick to the middle way.'

His decision to speak out again infuriated Eurosceptic MPs and led to fresh concerns about the PM's inability to impose discipline on her warring Cabinet.

Former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith suggested it was time for Mr Hammond to 'shut up'. He said: 'We don't need Cabinet ministers, Chancellor or otherwise, to give their own views and opinions and nuance the message. It's very simple, if you've got nothing to say that is absolutely on-message, shut up, don't say it.'

Former Tory Scottish Secre-

tary Lord Forsyth urged the PM to 'get a grip' on senior ministers.

Party grandee Bernard Jenkin said MPs wanted her to force Mr Hammond back into line. 'If there are big ideological divisions between the

### 'There is no middle way'

Prime Minister and the Chancellor, that is usually not very good news for the stability of a government,' he added.

Tory MP Andrew Bridgen said: 'There is no middle way on Brexit – we are either staying or leaving.'

Privately, some Tory MPs are

## Russia fear 'worthy of Monty Python'

MOSCOW yesterday ridiculed Gavin Williamson after he warned Russia could cause 'thousands and thousands and thousands' of deaths in an attack on Britain's energy supply.

Russian officials said the comments were 'worthy of a Monty Python sketch' and suggested the Defence Secretary had 'lost his grasp on reason'.

Mr Williamson said Russia had been looking at the UK's critical infrastructure such as power stations and interconnectors that allow the transfer of electricity across borders. He speculated the 'real threat' could be carried out by cyber attack, from undersea activity or a missile.

But Russian defence ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov said: 'Gavin Williamson in his fiery crusade for military budget money appears to have lost his grasp on reason.'



Warning: Mr Williamson

urging Mrs May to sack her Chancellor – a move she has toyed with in the past.

Former Cabinet minister Priti Patel said Mr Hammond's comments were 'completely inconsistent' with the PM's stated position on Brexit.

She added: 'The ideas he is setting out are not Government policy and not what the British people voted for.'

The Chancellor yesterday insisted he fully backed the PM. He urged MPs not to rock the boat, amid claims dozens have written letters of no confidence to Sir Graham Brady, chairman of the backbench 1922 Committee.

Reports claim up to 40 MPs have now added their names – close to the 48 needed to trig-

ger a leadership contest. Sources dismiss the claims, however.

Downing Street insiders are privately furious with Mr Hammond. One source described him as a 'nightmare' to deal with.

A senior Eurosceptic said Mrs May had to resolve the Cabinet's splits on Brexit, adding: 'It is essentially a battle between the Chancellor and Boris. No one knows what the PM thinks, or even if she has a view. It is a really dangerous time.'

Mrs May had been expected to deliver a major speech on Brexit next month, setting out her vision for the future relationship with Europe.

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