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Owen plan offers vote on Britain in Europe

Eurozone crisis prompts call for referendum

Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor

Britain must decide in a referendum whether to stay in the European Union or seize the moment to throw off the "shackles" imposed by Brussels, Lord Owen says in *The Times* today.

The Labour Foreign Secretary from 1977-79 says that voters must be asked

fast-moving developments across Europe in which:

- Markets rose on the news that European Union and German officials are talking to Spain about ways to bail out stricken Spanish banks;

- David Cameron flew to Norway for meetings with Jens Stoltenberg, the Prime Minister. He meets Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, today in Berlin.

Lord Owen is the most senior political figure to embrace the idea of a referendum. His warnings, in a new e-book, *Europe Restructured*, published today, carry force from one of the most ardent supporters of Britain's entry into the European club.

By drawing up two specific questions he puts pressure on David Cameron and Ed Miliband to address the issue at the heart of Britain's dilemma with Europe. The peer believes that both the Conservative and Labour leaders will have to promise a referendum between now and 2016.

Lord Owen envisages that the "European Union" is likely to morph into an inner core of nations that share the euro as their currency and have, "to all intents and purposes, though not in name, a single government".

Meanwhile, Britain would be part of a reformed "European Community", an expanded and reinvigorated single market. Membership would be given to all EU and European Free Trade Association members, as well as Turkey.

Exit from the European Union would mean returning to Westminster control over key areas that have passed to Brussels, including agricultural, fishing and industrial policy, as well as social, foreign and security policies, a move that would delight many Tory MPs. Writing in *The Times*, Lord Owen

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REFERENDUM QUESTIONS

Do you want the UK to be part of the single market in a wider European Community?
Yes/No

Do you want the UK to be part of the EU with a view to joining the euro?
Yes/No

The Owen Plan, pages 8-9 and 24



whether Britain would be better off leaving the EU to join a new, wider single market stretching from Iceland to Turkey.

Urgent action is needed because German plans to save the eurozone are forcing the European Union closer to a "single country called Europe", he says. That risks undermining Britain's ability to remain a self-governing nation.

The Owen plan comes after a day of



The Queen at the King Edward VII Hospital yesterday after visiting the Duke of Edinburgh. He hopes to be home for his birthday on Sunday. News, pages 4, 5

Good news about Duke brightens Queen's day

Officials hid key facts over girl's abuse

Andrew Norfolk

An official report into the way care agencies dealt with a murdered girl concealed key information about adults suspected of grooming and using her for sex from the age of 11, *The Times* can reveal today.

Laura Wilson, 17, was repeatedly stabbed then thrown into a South Yorkshire canal in 2010, six years after concerns were raised that she was at risk of being sexually exploited by men.

Details kept secret when a serious case review was published last week can be reported today after a safeguarding board abandoned legal action against *The Times*. The board had redacted — blocked out with thick black lines — information identifying Laura as one of several girls in Rotherham who were suspected of falling victim to sexual abuse by "Asian men".

Also kept hidden were details of care professionals' involvement with Laura from the age of 11 to 15, including meet-

Moral cowardice that concealed findings

News, page 17

ings that discussed concerns about child sexual exploitation. The board's application for a High Court injunction to gag *The Times* was dropped after Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, accused the board of withholding "relevant and important material".

The redactions, coupled with Rotherham's attempt to suppress the report in the courts, will lend support to the impression that child sex exploitation is not being confronted robustly by care professionals and local government.

Laura, identified in the report as "Child S", was murdered in Rotherham by Ashtiaq Asghar, 17. Ishaq Hussain, 21, a married man who made her pregnant a month after her 16th birthday, was found not guilty of murder.

The report, published by Rotherham's safeguarding children board, found that 15 agencies had had dealings with Laura. It identified "numerous missed opportunities" to protect a vulnerable child who became "almost invisible" to some care professionals.

Redactions were made to 61 of the report's 144 pages, ostensibly to protect "the privacy and welfare" of the dead

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