

Outgoing vice-chancellor tells universities: Brexit is 'the catalyst we all need'



CREDIT: DAVID GREENAWAY, BREXIT RUSSELL GROUP

- [Javier Espinoza](#), education editor

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Universities should stop complaining about Brexit because it is the 'catalyst we all need', the chair of the Russell Group has said.

Sir David Greenaway, who represents some of Britain's most elite universities, has argued a world where the UK is no longer part of the EU will give universities the freedom they need to exceed expectations.

In the run up to the referendum vote in June universities had warned EU students would be put off studying at British institutions.

They have also warned academic cooperation could become more difficult in the case of tighter border controls. But these fears are yet to materialise.

'Slight unease'

[Writing for The Telegraph](#), Sir David said: "Did you know an astonishing 90 per cent of the Higher Education community voted for remain? Compared with the Leave campaign's winning margin of only 4 per cent, it's a position of relative unity that would make many people blush. Yet it fills me with a slight unease."

“Why? Because it suggests either the academic world knows something the electorate doesn’t or we’re hopelessly out of touch.

“While we deal with this sense of loss and disconnect there's a risk that the opportunities presented by Brexit are overshadowed.

“As our future becomes more closely determined by trade and forging new global links, all universities, and not just those in the Russell Group, have a lot to share with Whitehall.”

'Sense of breaking free'

Sir David, who is also vice-chancellor of the University of Nottingham, added: “You may think Nottingham too small to think like this, compared with the Londons and Manchesters of this world.

“In fact, we’re the ninth largest city in the fifth biggest economy in the world. Nottingham University has partnerships with Rolls-Royce, Boots, and GSK and we were the first foreign university to set up a campus in China.

He added: “The spirit of endeavour that took us there was the same spirit that took me from a Glasgow tenement as a child to Vice Chancellor of this university and I’m keen to rediscover that sense of breaking free and exceeding expectations all over again. We all can.

“Brexit might be the catalyst we all need.”