

Brexit deal threatens Britain's lucrative classic car industry

It might be a success for new-car makers, but a significant part of the UK's car industry might not do so well out of the new trade deal

By Andrew English, MOTORING CORRESPONDENT
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The passion for historic cars in the UK extends to a host of small but expert specialist firms renowned worldwide | CREDIT: Will Broadhead

The Brexit deal announced on Christmas Eve has been welcomed as a success for the new-car-making industry, although not everyone in the automotive business is smiling. The classic car industry, which according to a recent estimate provides more than 90,000 (or 11.3 per cent) of total motor industry jobs in the UK, isn't quite so delighted.

After poring through the small print, a panel of experts concluded that there are several areas of concern for the historic vehicle industry. These mainly involve the status of cars arriving in the UK from abroad for specialist work or restoration at Britain's vast network of small-scale vehicle specialists, and also the status of classic car owners touring or taking part in long-distance rallies in Europe.

"It is clear that despite huge progress having been made and incorporated in the Brexit deal, there is a lot that is left unresolved," says the joint statement from Ben Cussons, chairman of the Royal Automobile Club, David Whale, chairman of the Federation of British Historic Vehicles Clubs (FBHVC), Tomas de Vargas Machuca, chairman of Hero-ERA, and Douglas McWilliams, deputy chairman of the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr).

As we reported in November, [in 2019 Britain's classic car industry provided an estimated £7.2 billion to the UK economy](#), with 4,000 businesses employing over 34,000 people according to the FBHVC report at that time.

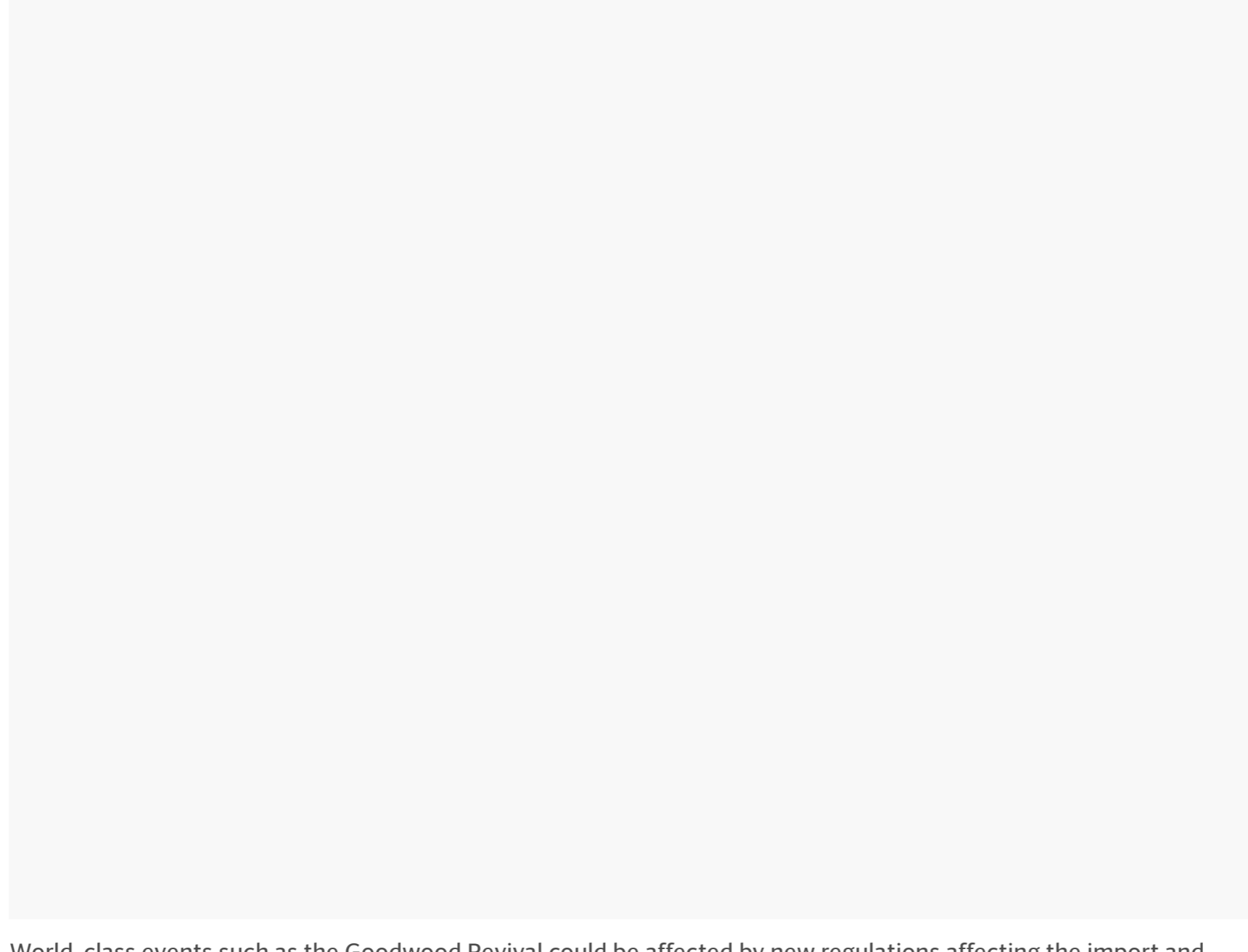


Depending on the figures, either 34,000 or as many as 90,000 people are employed in the UK's classic car industry | CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

These figures differ somewhat from the Cebr report, entitled *Economic And Environmental Impact Of The Historic And Classic Motor Industry In The UK*, which suggests a turnover of £18.3 billion and the provision of more than 92,000 direct and indirect jobs; but the Cebr report spread its net much wider, including the broader classic car categories of touring, racing, tourism and events.

"The FBHVC was inside looking in, while the Cebr report for Hero-ERA was looking at the sector as a whole," said one insider.

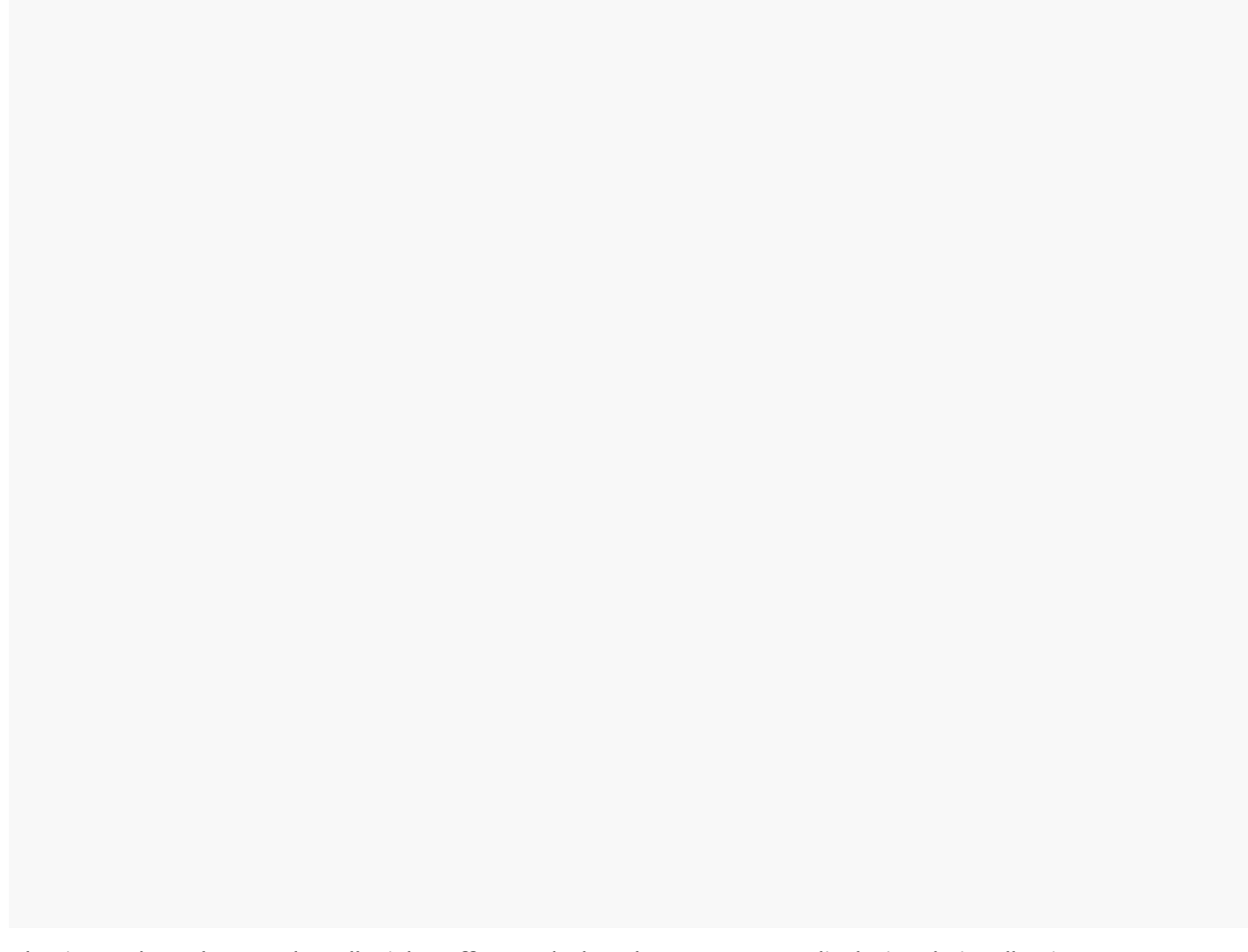
Either way, classic cars are pulling their weight financially and any threat, real or implied, might impact on what has been a burgeoning sector and earner of foreign exchange. Throughout the last six months, news has reached [Telegraph Cars](#) of British race and restoration specialists getting calls from foreign-based owners instructing the rapid repatriation of their classic car collections to their home countries before the Brexit deadline.



World-class events such as the Goodwood Revival could be affected by new regulations affecting the import and export of historic cars

At issue (as ever) is the small print of the Brexit document and the way it will be interpreted by individual EU member states. While the clauses on repaired and remanufactured goods are seemingly comprehensive, there is ambiguity about the precise status of historic cars – and specifically whether they would be required to meet modern car standards when reimported. Similarly, the position of parts and tools might also be open to ambiguity.

As far as events are concerned, it should be possible for people to go to the EU in their classics without a visa and using their UK driving licences (for no more than 90 days in any 180-day period), but insurance requirements are still unclear since EU-wide cover will no longer be standard.



Classic car shows large and small might suffer - and what about UK owners displaying their collections at European shows?

There is also an anomaly for events staff working overseas, as there appears to be no specific exemptions for UK nationals to work for such organisations in the EU. In addition, there is likely to be a *carnet* requirement for filming which is likely to cost more than £200, while the French have a specific reservation that tour guides working in La Belle France have to be French nationals...

"It is therefore important that when the details are tied up, this sector is not impeded by the Brexit arrangements," says de Vargas Machuca. "It will be crucial for the relevant Departments to contact the leaders of the relevant bodies to ensure that this happens."



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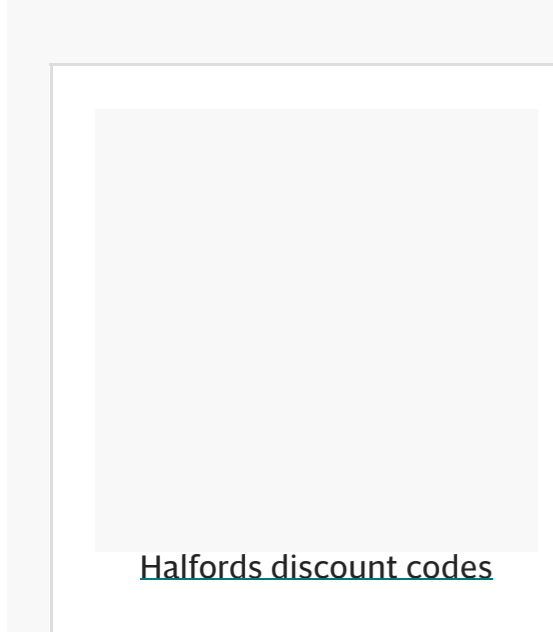
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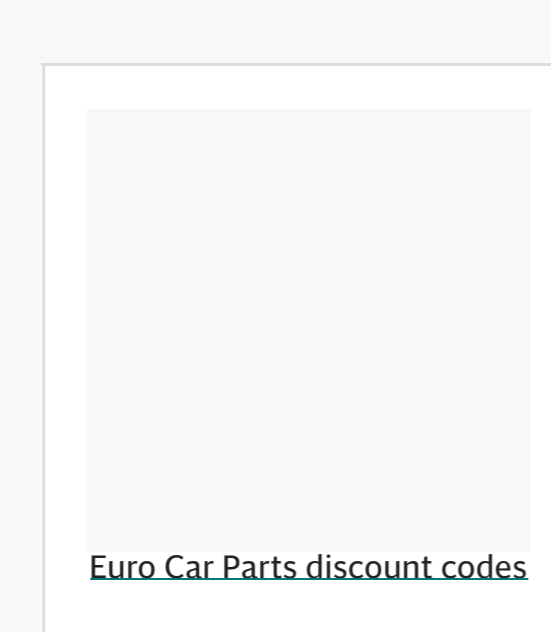
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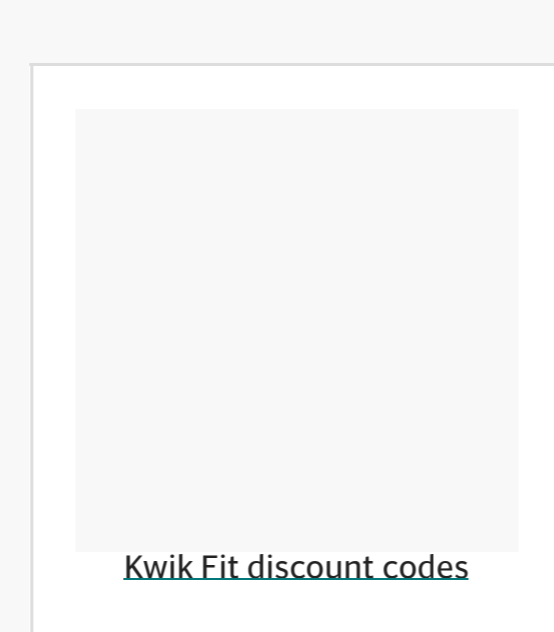
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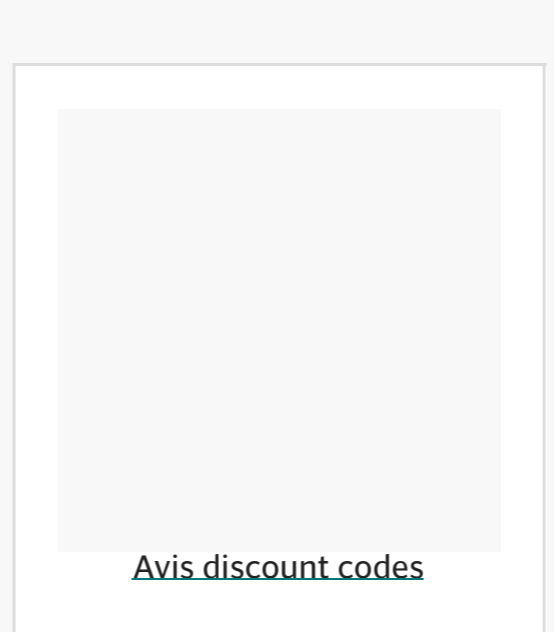
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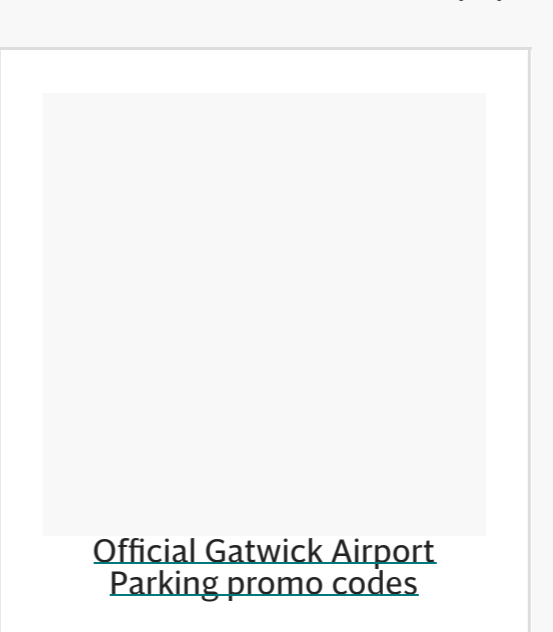
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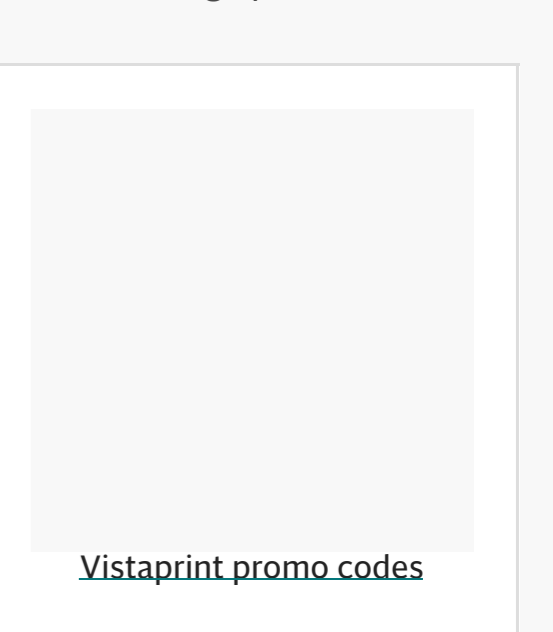
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