

“A once in a generation decision”

The UK government sent every household a leaflet about the EU referendum.

It has as its headline “ A once in a generation decision”. There was no mention of two votes or a second chance to decide. Nor do we need a second ballot.

It said about the decision to stay or leave “This is your decision. The government will implement what you decide”. It also made clear the government strongly recommended staying in, and warned that we could not stay part of the single market whilst leaving the EU.

Many of us voted Leave in good faith that if we won we would leave the EU and its single market, as we wished to do. We also voted secure in the knowledge that the government would implement our wishes and not expect us to vote twice.

We now want to get on with the benefits of leaving. We want the government to energetically pursue new trade deals with non EU countries. We want a new migration system that works for us. We want new fishing and farming policies that boost our home industries.

A Remain oriented Parliament has made heavy weather of honouring these government pledges, but has now reluctantly passed the EU Withdrawal Act. Taken together with the Article 50 letter which Parliament sent by an overwhelming majority, the UK has now done all it needs to do legally to leave on 29 March 2019.

A possible Chequers deal does not implement the wishes of the majority to leave, but looks unlikely to find favour either with the EU or with a significant number of Conservative MPs. Yesterday again at conference members of the party made crystal clear their dislike of Chequers and their wish to get on and leave quickly. There were large crowds for pro Brexit speakers at fringe meetings, and a muted response to Ministers pushing the government line. I urge the government to make clear to the EU that we are currently planning just to leave in accordance with the Acts passed and with the decision of the UK electorate. The sooner the EU believes this is what will happen, the sooner they will want to sort out those things about their continued access to the UK market that some worry about. In practice the UK government is not planning new barriers, but does need to get on with setting out its post 29 March tariff schedule which might provoke a wish to trade tariff free by the EU.