

Brexit policy and how to negotiate

I am glad the PM has made clear we will end freedom of movement and have our own migration policy on exit, as I reminded people here on this blog last week. She has also clarified the issue of a transitional Agreement. The UK has not asked for one. We still have 19 months left to negotiate a proper Agreement. Negotiating a transitional one would require prior consent to a full Agreement, then allowing discussion of how to transition from the one to the other. It is not intrinsically easier to negotiate a Transitional Agreement than a permanent Agreement, and requires consent to where the two parties are going during transition.

There are those in the Opposition, the media and business who seem to want to turn the EU/UK talks into a negotiation amongst ourselves about what we are trying to achieve. This is damaging to the UK's official negotiating strategy, as it leads some in the EU to think that if they delay and prod the UK will change its mind and offer to carry on with budget contributions, freedom of movement and the other items that so favour the rest of the EU. MPs and others in senior positions in the Labour party keep changing their minds about membership of the single market and customs union, long after Parliament has voted decisively both to send the Article 50 letter and to exit both the single market and Customs Union.

Let's have another go at reminding people what the UK has already decided. The people voted to leave the EU. They did so with both official campaigns pointing out this meant leaving the single market and customs Union. They voted leave to take back control, especially of our money, our laws and our borders.

Remain supporters then forced legislation and Parliamentary votes to test out the will of the people. Parliament voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU. The Commons since the election has voted to leave the single market and customs union as part of that, as was always implied in the previous Parliamentary votes.

Some Remain supporters now want to invent a Transitional Agreement, requiring the UK to go on paying budget contributions, accepting freedom of movement, and continuing to accept new EU laws. This is not government policy, and is clearly against the wishes of the people as expressed in the Referendum.

When asked why they want this, they usually argue that the other EU member states will damage their trade with us and our trade with them if we do not accept continuing features of EU membership. It is a cruel irony that the most pro EU are the most negative about the nature and likely actions of our EU partners. They are also going to be proved wrong on this as on so much else about Brexit. WTO rules work fine, if the rest of the EU really does want to damage its valuable exports of agricultural produce and cars. Their more voluminous exports will attract far more tariff than our sales to them. Under WTO rules and international law the EU cannot stop companies and individuals in its territory buying and selling things with the UK.