

# Davis: Facing the future

David

Davis MP, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, speaking today at

Conservative Party Conference in Manchester said:

**(Check  
against delivery)**

“Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be here in this great City, a city forever associated with free trade.

The historic buildings we see all around us, they were all built on the back of trade.

Today, I want to talk about how we can draw inspiration from that past, to carve out a new place for ourselves in the world, to rise to the new set of challenges that face us as new technologies threaten to change our world faster than ever.

When we met last year in the shadow of the Referendum emotions were still raw.

A year later, there is a new mood.

People want to look to the future.

They are fed up that people in Westminster seem to be stuck in an endless debate while the rest of the world wants to get a move on.

Over a year later I still get people coming up to me every day saying: ‘best of luck’ or ‘get a good deal for us Mr Davis’, and even, ‘Surely it can’t be that difficult?’

And that’s just the Cabinet.

Joking aside, every time I walk down the street, get on a train or walk through an airport...

People – not leave voters, or remain voters any more – just ordinary decent people, enthusiastically come up to me and wish me well on our shared project.

They know it's not going to be easy or straightforward.

But the reasons that so many men and women voted to leave a year and a half ago are the same reasons that drive me every day right now:

We have been given a one-off time-limited extraordinary opportunity.

An opportunity to make sure that all the decisions about the future of this country are taken by our parliament, our courts, our institutions.

Decisions about how to spend our taxes – made here in Britain.

Decisions about who comes into the country – made here in Britain.

All our laws – made here in Britain.

We need to get Britain standing on its own two feet – facing outwards to the world.

And it's that last point, looking forward to Britain's Global role, which I want to talk to you about now.

One of the most powerful arguments I've heard for being outside the European Union was simple.

And it goes like this:

'What kind of internationalism is it which says that this country must give priority to a Frenchman over an Indian, a German over an Australian, an Italian over a Malaysian.'

It couldn't have been further from a Conservative Conference.

Having been said by Barbara Castle in 1975.

But what she meant, rings true today.

We are a global nation. We export more goods and services than Russia, Brazil and Indonesia combined

We have one of the greatest armed forces on the planet...

Who show their worth to the world in the Indian

Ocean, in Iraq and the Baltics.

We train the best diplomats  
and put them to the test by sending them to work for the Foreign Secretary.

Now that we are leaving the European Union.

It allows us to be more international, not less.

It requires us to face the world,  
not looking away or glancing  
back,  
but with confidence and  
determination about the future we will build.

And ladies and gentlemen  
there is only one party which  
can deliver that and it is our Conservative Party.

Now, I would be happy to work with the Labour Party  
in the national interest, putting aside our differences for the good of the  
country.

But they have been playing a different game.

They've now published 11 separate Brexit plans  
and they are to paraphrase Tolstoy,  
each unhappy in its own  
unique way.

For the customs union...then against it

For the single market...then against it

For  
freedom of movement...then against it

Where we have introduced a Repeal Bill to take  
control of our laws and provide legal certainty...

They opposed it and offered no alternative.

Where we set out our negotiating positions and got  
the process started...

They opposed it and offered no alternative.

Where we have set out a plan for life outside the  
EU...with free trade and a strong economy...

They opposed it and offered no alternative.

They claim they respect the outcome of the  
Referendum...

...but oppose every step required to deliver it.

This is the most complex negotiation you could imagine

Where one oversight, one error could cost the taxpayer billions of pounds...

And just last week I heard Keir Starmer say, 'We mustn't get bogged down in discussions about technicalities'

Well I'm afraid ignoring the details of Brexit just won't cut it.

It's like they've got a new slogan: 'Labour...government without the hard bits'.

Well we are different in this party

We respect the people's decision

And we will deliver the people's decision

And as we do it, we will have to be clear eyed about what we want to achieve.

Because the future of our country is much more than just Brexit.

And it is something to be excited about whether you voted leave or remain.

As Liam has just told you the European Commission itself says that 90 per cent of the future global growth will come from outside Europe.

Having an independent trade policy will allow us to embrace those opportunities to the full.

And it gives us an opportunity to lead a race to the top.

To push up global standards.

To protect rights for workers.

To improve productivity and increase wages.

And lead the world as the champion of free trade.

Campaigning for the poverty-busting, affluence-spreading, wealth-creating impact that it can have.

Last week I was in Brussels.

Representing Britain in the fourth round of negotiations

We are making real steps forwards getting results on issues which affect people's daily lives.

On the rights of British citizens in the Europe and European citizens here.

We will allow all 4 million of them to live their lives as they do now.

I am certain we can secure a deal on this soon.

On Northern Ireland and Ireland both the UK and the European Union are fully committed to protecting the peace process and ensuring that there is no return to the problems of the past.

And on the issue of the money

Yes, as the Prime Minister has promised, we will honour our commitments.

Because ours is a country that which plays by the rules and obeys the law.

But we will do our duty for the British taxpayer, and challenge these claims line by line.

We must never lose sight of the bigger picture, and the prize on offer at the end of the process.

And it is only in this context, that we can finally settle this issue.

Closer to home, we are getting Britain ready for Brexit step-by-step.

The first step is the Repeal Bill.

A critical piece of legislation, which ends the supremacy of EU law.

It is essential to a smooth and orderly exit.

And it helps provide the clarity which citizens and businesses have been clamouring for.

Now where MPs set out to improve this legislation, we will welcome their contribution...

But be in no doubt: this Bill is essential and we will not allow it to be wrecked.

On the negotiating front, we are aiming for a good deal

And that is what we expect to achieve.

However, if the outcome of the negotiation falls short of the deal that Britain needs we will be ready for the alternative.

That is what a responsible Government does. Anything else would be a dereliction of duty.

So there is a determined exercise underway in Whitehall devoted to contingency arrangements so that we are ready for any outcome.

Not because it is what we seek, but because it needs to be done.

And while much of our task lies ahead, when I look at what we've achieved so far it should give us cause for optimism.

That we will strike that deal, and create that shared future.

Because Brexit is not a rejection of Europe, or indeed the values and ideals that are shared across our continent.

It is a decision by the British people to leave the political project.

A project which may be right for the other nations who remain there by the consent of their people.

But one that is no longer right for us.

They approach it through the prism of their own history – one that, in the past, was all too often determined by dictatorship and domination, invasion and occupation.

For them Europe symbolises democracy, liberty, modernity, the rule of law.

Our own island story follows a different path.

We had been the leading liberal democracy for over a century before we joined the common market.

And when we decided to leave the European Union we

voted,  
not against the political  
project itself, but  
against Britain's involvement in it.

Europe's history will continue, and so will ours, and  
we will remain good friends and allies.

And for those who claim that we are not good  
Europeans.

Well, did you know that we spend one and half times as  
much on defence as the European average? That is how we stationed troops on  
Europe's border in Estonia and in Poland.

I call that being a good European.

We spend over twice the European average helping the  
poorest people on the planet.

Including in Africa where for many, British aid acts  
as a ladder for people to climb out of the hands of people smugglers.

I call that being a good European.

And we are the first to help our neighbours in the  
fight against terror...as both our Belgian and our French colleagues found last  
year.

I call that being a good European.

This is more than warm words.

None of it comes for free.

If we spent only the European average on defence, on  
international development, on intelligence, we would spend £22 billion less a  
year.

And that isn't going away. Because we choose to be  
good global citizens.

That's what we mean when we say we are leaving the  
EU, but not leaving Europe or *our shared values*.

So this is our plan, and I'm incredibly lucky to have been given the team  
to deliver it.

The intelligence, dedication and sheer hard work of  
Robin Walker, Steve Baker and our Minister in the Lords Joyce Anelay.

Our excellent PPSs, Gareth Johnson and Jeremy Quinn.

And the support of our hard-working public-spirited

and patriotic civil servants in Whitehall.

And on a personal point can I put on record my thanks for my two former Ministers David Jones and George Bridges.

I'd like you to join me in thanking them all.

So together, as a team, we will work to deliver the national interest.

Now if there's one thing I don't need to do today, it's to remind you to believe in our country.

But if I have one message for you, it is to keep your eyes on the prize.

You will have read in the newspapers lurid accounts of the negotiations with the predictions of break down and crisis.

Offensive, indeed insulting, briefing to the newspapers, which I take as a compliment.

Of course sometimes the exchanges are tough, but that is to be expected.

The job the Prime Minister has entrusted to me is to keep a calm eye on our goal and not be diverted.

Because the prizes for success are enormous. As are the consequences of failure.

I didn't campaign so hard in the referendum for the pleasure of negotiating with the European Commission

I did it because the future of this country is great.

And this Government is facing up to it.

Success will not be automatic, we will have to work hard for it.

We will encourage the things that we Conservatives believe in:

Hard work, Enterprise, risk-taking

Innovation, competition, self-reliance.

When we leave the EU, our successes, and yes, our failures, will be ours and ours alone.



But we are the country of  
William Shakespeare and Jane  
Austen,  
of Alexander Fleming and  
James Dyson. A  
super power in science, with the fairest legal system in the world.

Britain is where you come if you want to study  
artificial intelligence or life sciences

And being who we are and drawing on our strengths,  
we can be confident that our  
successes will dwarf our failures

So let us turn to face the future,

Delivering on the referendum

Setting out a new relationship with Europe.

Pushing forward, to grasp the opportunities that lie  
ahead.

Looking forward, to the future we forge together.

Putting our country on the path to greatness once  
again.”

ENDS