

Getting Brexit done

The Conservative Manifesto of 2019 promised to get Brexit done. It stated the government would "take the whole country out of the EU as one United Kingdom". We would leave the Customs Union, be able to pass our own laws and end the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. "There will be no political alignment with the EU". We would take back control of our laws, our money and trade policy, and ensure we are in full control of our fishing waters.

The central offer was to "use our new post Brexit freedoms to transform the UK for the better by focusing on your priorities".

In some blogs in the days ahead I will examine how far the government has got in implementing this vision, and how we can take advantage of our new freedoms to do better. At the time of the Withdrawal Agreement I drew attention to issues over Northern Ireland trade and fishing, and was told by Ministers these would be sorted out for in the final Agreement. I was not satisfied they were so I did not vote for the final Agreement.

I am pleased that the government now recognises that the trade position for Northern Ireland is entirely unsatisfactory and needs substantial change. I urge them to take action to enforce the clear statements in the Northern Ireland Protocol that both sides respect the internal market of the UK and regard Northern Ireland as part of that market and customs Union. The Protocol condemns diversion of trade, yet we are witnessing a major diversion of trade from GB to NI to EU to NI. The UK should instruct our Customs officials to allow free passage of goods from GB to NI as we do within the rest of the UK, if necessary confirming the instruction to them in UK legislation and making clear this is the UK interpretation of the NI Protocol. The UK Act should also confirm UK sovereignty over NIU/GB trade and exclude any role for the ECJ.