

Letter to Geoffrey Cox about the draft Withdrawal Agreement

Dear Geoffrey,

I am glad you are seeking to replace the unacceptable Irish backstop which is written into the Withdrawal Agreement which was vetoed in the recent Commons vote.

There are other features of the Withdrawal Agreement which I and other MPs cannot accept which also need attention in the national interest.

Under the draft Withdrawal Agreement the EU will enjoy of period of at least 21 months, and up to 45 months, when it can legislate for the UK under the wide ranging competencies it has from the Treaty. This would permit the EU to enact laws and regulations banning or requiring changes to the way we do business, control the environment, treat people, offer business support and organise trade which could be against our national interest. It could require the transfer of business into the Eurozone at our expense. We will no longer have the power to veto or to create blocking minorities to prevent measures that are damaging.

What action are you taking to prevent abuse of these wide ranging powers and to ensure we are indeed taking back control of our laws?

The EU is moving to impose and alter more taxes by qualified majority with a view to increasing the range and incidence of EU taxes. As we will have lost our veto over tax anyway, what powers are you seeking to avoid the imposition of new taxes and additional taxation on us via the Withdrawal Agreement?

It is most important no additional tax can be imposed without UK consent.

The Withdrawal Agreement sets out under a general heading where it reserves to the EU the right to send us big bills in the future. The £39 bn cost of the Withdrawal Agreement is a low estimate of what it might mean compiled by the UK Treasury. It is not an EU accepted cash limit. What safeguards are you seeking to ensure the bills do not escalate and to ensure the UK can refuse to pay unreasonable bills submitted under the general powers of the EU? Spending our own money on our own priorities was a big part of the reason to leave.

I will make these questions public as they are of considerable national interest, and look forward to your reply. I assume you are pursuing these matters as part of seeking a fair deal, and in order to reassure the many MPs who cannot currently support the Withdrawal Agreement.

Yours ever

John Redwood