

Preparing for No deal

The EU's comment yesterday that it will take a miracle to get early trade talks with the UK is not an accurate statement of the position. It would apparently take the UK offering them sheds loads of money to get trade talks going. I am glad the UK is not doing so. We should pay them nothing for talks, as they need trade talks more than we do. We should pay them nothing for a Free Trade deal, as that would be against the spirit and probably against the rules of the WTO. If they want each side to have to pay to trade, then WTO tariffs is the cheapest and easiest way of paying for trade, and would be legal. I remain to be persuaded that we owe them anything other than our regular contributions.

As the EU is clearly now overplaying their weak hand, the UK needs to show it is serious about going for No Deal. That would also be the best way to get them to talk about trade, when they realise we are prepared to put tariffs up against their food exports.

Today I invite all those who think No Deal would be bad to write in with specific problems they think will arise. I will then respond with how we could fix any that might be an issue.

Some say the planes will not be able to fly because there will be no Air Services Agreement in place. Work is underway to ensure the reciprocal landing rights UK and EU carriers already enjoy are continued.

Some say there will be queues of lorries at Dover carrying all our imports that will cause customs chaos. Work is underway to have registered traders filing details of consignments electronically so lorries can proceed quickly and tariffs can be levied electronically. We are also building a huge lorry park to deal with French strike days which can be used if anything else goes wrong.

Most just say there will be a cliff edge without having a clue why. There is no cliff. The day after we leave French farmers and German car makers will still be sending us their exports. In return we will still be selling things on the continent. The cliff edge has all the potency of the Millennium Bug.