

# Set the record straight over Boris Johnson's misleading Brexit claims, Starmer tells Barclay

**Labour demands minister 'sets the record straight' over Boris Johnson's misleading Brexit claims**

Keir Starmer has written to the Brexit Secretary Steve Barclay calling on him to "set the record straight" in Parliament later today over Boris Johnson's misleading Brexit claims. The letter comes ahead of Brexit questions in the House of Commons this morning.

## **Notes to editors**

A copy of Keir Starmer's letter is below:

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union

9 Downing Street

London, SW1A 2AG

27 June 2019

Dear Steve

The next Prime Minister will inherit the biggest political crisis this country has faced in recent history. The Government's Brexit deal has been rejected three times, the negotiations are at an impasse and

there are now only four months to go until the October deadline.

If we are to break the deadlock the next Prime Minister will need to have a credible plan and be honest with the British public about the difficult choices ahead.

However, over recent days, Boris Johnson, who you are supporting in the Tory leadership contest, has made a number of misleading claims about the Withdrawal Agreement and about what can be achieved in the negotiations before October:

- **That the UK can rely on GATT 24 to deliver tariff free trade in the event of no deal.** “There will be no tariffs, there will be no quotas because what we want to do is to get a standstill in our current arrangements under GATT 24, or whatever it happens to be, until such a time as we have negotiated the

[free trade agreement]

.”<sup>i</sup>

- **That the UK can cherry pick the Withdrawal Agreement.** “You disaggregate the elements of the otherwise defunct Withdrawal Agreement... You reserve the payment of the £39 billion... That is in the context of the Free Trade Agreement, that we’ll negotiate in the implementation period, after we’ve come out on Oct 31st”.<sup>ii</sup>
- **That there are existing technological solutions to the Northern Ireland border.** “There are abundant, abundant technical fixes that can be introduced to make sure that you don’t have to have checks at the border.”<sup>iii</sup>
- **That Parliament would support a no deal.** “I do [believe I can get no deal through Parliament] ... I think Parliament now understands.”<sup>iv</sup>
- **That we can have a standstill transition without a withdrawal agreement.** “I think that the way to come out is with a standstill between the UK and

the EU so that we keep going with the existing arrangements until such time as we've completed our free trade agreement and we use that period to solve the questions of the Northern Irish border. I think we can do that.”<sup>v</sup>

You will know as well as I do that these claims are not based in reality.

As Secretary of State and a supporter of Boris Johnson's campaign, you have an opportunity – and I believe a duty – to set the record straight and present an honest assessment of the difficult choices facing the next Prime Minister. I'm writing to ask that you do this at this morning's Brexit questions in the House of Commons.

If these claims are not corrected, then I believe the next administration will repeat the mistakes of its predecessor, with false promises, empty rhetoric and unrealistic red lines.

I look forward to your reply in the Commons later today.

Yours sincerely,

**Keir Starmer QC MP**

**Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union**

[i]

BBC News, [Gatt 24: Would obscure trade rule help with no-deal Brexit?](#) 24 June 2019

[ii]

PoliticsHome, [Cabinet ministers tear into Boris Johnson's plan for no-deal Brexit](#), 23 June 2019

[iii]

BBC News, [In full: Boris Johnson interview with BBC's Laura Kuennsberg](#), 24 June 2019

[iv]

BBC News, [In full: Boris Johnson interview with BBC's Laura Kuennsberg](#), 24 June 2019

[v]

Talk Radio, [Boris Johnson – the talkRADIO interview](#), 25 June 2019