

# The art of the deal

Life requires a series of negotiations. If you are buying a good or service the negotiation with the provider may be over price, quality, specification or other matters. You may start as a buyer with an idea of the service you want and an idea of a low price. The provider may have to explain that the available service is different and dearer.

Sometimes you the buyer recognise that what you thought was on offer is not. You could decide to buy what is on offer, and accept it is dearer, but you are more likely to decide that as what you want is not available it's better to save your money or buy something else.

Other times you reach agreement over the style and quantity of service, and have to strike a compromise over the price. The buyer has to weigh up how much the provider needs the business, and the provider needs to guess how much you want the service. More often than not a bargain is struck, but one or both sides may miscalculate and end up with no deal. If one or other side is unable to walk away from the deal, then they will usually get a bad deal. The other party will exploit their weakness to a greater or lesser extent.

Most people understand this. Many people have bought a house, bought a car, or negotiated with a builder or some other domestic service provider. They have also often walked away from a house or a car as they turned out not to be good deals. They know you walk away unless you really want something, and that you have to be willing to walk away if you want to keep pressure on for good quality and good value. This makes people all the more frustrated when they see how the UK has not done this in negotiating with the EU. We have seen time and again how the opposition to Brexit in Parliament and in the establishment have constantly been undermining efforts by the UK to pursue a firm line in the negotiations. Mrs May refused to walk away when the EU came up with a very damaging sequencing to the negotiation, giving them all they wanted in the first part, the Withdrawal treaty, and leaving everything the UK might want open until after the first part was signed. She then refused to walk away when the draft Withdrawal Agreement took shape with a huge move to keep our money, keep us under the EU control for longer, and to invent an Irish backstop as a possible means to keep us indefinitely in the customs union and following single market laws. Now some of these same people have decided to cripple the UK's attempt at a renegotiation by ruling out walking away, our best card to get the attention of EU negotiators.

The big advantages we have are manifest. We pay them money, they don't pay us money (net). They sell us far more imports than we sell them. Much more of their trade faces tariffs if we leave with no agreement than we face. We can trade quite successfully under WTO rules, with lower tariffs on fewer products out than in. We can regain control of our money, our laws, our borders and our fish. If only the opposition would let the government negotiate against the possibility of No deal. Armed with such formidable advantages we would have a decent chance of getting them to agree to free

trade talks and no new barriers on exit. As it is the EU sniffs weakness and continues to offer nothing in the hope that the opposition will do their work for them. As Mrs May used rightly to say, no deal is better than a bad deal. In this case a lot better as what is on offer is a very bad deal.

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## Meeting with community representatives against the Bridge Farm planning application

I met with opponents of the Bridge farm quarry today. I confirmed that I am against a quarry in that location, for the reasons set out in the Council's decision on the application. I will be happy to assist the Council in anyway should this matter go to appeal. I will take up with the Council the issue of which sites are identified in their new Minerals Plan to make sure they do not intend to identify this location.

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## Planning application at Bridge Farm

I am pleased to report that Wokingham Council considered carefully the planning application at bridge Farm and refused permission. Like you I am pleased that they came to this conclusion.

Should the decision be appealed I will support the Council as I promised before the decision.

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## Who wants an election?

It was curious to see how practically no Opposition MPs wanted a General election when offered the opportunity on Wednesday night.

The SNP probably do want an early election. They think they can improve their current position at Westminster.

Change UK and the Independents do not want an early election. They see from

the polls that they are all likely to lose their seats. Of course many of the Independents recently created by their expulsion from the Conservative party will decide to take retirement. Most would probably like this Parliament to last a bit longer before they retire.

The Lib Dems probably think they could make some gains in an election, where they came a good second last time with a Labour vote to squeeze. Yet they have decided to resist the offer so far as they are more wedded to keeping us in the EU than anything else. They are clearly conscious of the weakness of other Remain parties, the ambiguity of the Labour position and the opportunity to annoy the Prime Minister more by refusing an immediate election. They have now said they wish to wait until the October 31 deadline has passed before facing voters. They want the PM to have to ask for a new extension against his wishes, and they may well want a longer extension than the suggested one until the end of January.

The Greens may have a similar position to the Lib Dems. As they do best in similar seats they have a difficult decision to make about whether both should fight all the most likely seats or whether they do a deal over which to contest.

Labour is not in much of a condition to fight an election. It is low in the polls, and deeply divided about what its best course of action would be. What will a Labour Manifesto say about the EU issue? Will it repeat the previous one promising to take us out, with new added language about a deal which only amounts to changing the Political declaration and accepting the Withdrawal Agreement? Will they sketch a possible Agreement which the EU of course may well reject? Will they demand that whatever deal is agreed is subject to a referendum vote on a Remain or deal choice? Will they just ask for a second referendum to try to get the public to change their minds? It seems likely that they will avoid anything too precise, with language that permits some to believe they will try to do a deal and others to think they will concentrate on a second vote. This will still leave a lot of their Midlands and Northern pro Leave seats vulnerable to parties that believe in Brexit.

Some on the Remain side think all these parties need an understanding to put together some kind of Remain platform and avoid too many contests where they oppose each other. It seems unlikely this will work. Labour will be very reluctant to come out clearly for Remain given the voting base in many of their current seats and given the studied ambiguity of the leadership for some time. Without Labour as part of any understanding an important part of this vote base would not be part of any deal. In Scotland it would be especially difficult to arrange an SNP/Labour agreement, just as Greens and Lib Dems are too close for comfort making a deal difficult.

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## My contribution to the debate on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 6) Bill, 4 September 2019

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** I would like us to leave on 31 October, as agreed, with a free trade agreement, or with serious talks about a free trade agreement, so that new tariffs or barriers need not be imposed on our trade with the EU or its trade with us. I am quite sure that we have a chance of achieving that only if so-called no deal is left firmly on the table, and if the European Union knows that we will leave with no withdrawal agreement or free trade agreement if it does not agree to those talks or offer such an agreement. That is our only lever.

I came to this debate against the Bill, because I think it tries to take away our only or best negotiating lever. I have looked carefully at amendment 6, new clause 1 and amendment 19, and I have listened to the debate on them. I am quite sure that the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) have very good intentions. I am sure that they are desperately trying to find compromise and a way forward at a time when the country is divided, as it was during the referendum campaign, and when this House remains extremely divided, or fragmented, into a series of different factions with different views on the best outcome.

Having listened to the debate, I share the view of my hon. Friends the Members for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) and for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope). The amendments are on the side of thwarting the referendum result. They are designed to undermine Britain's main negotiating card, which is our right to leave without having to make any more payments, accept any more laws or accept any instructions on our borders. The three things that the leave voters I met in large numbers during the referendum campaign wanted were to take control of our money, our borders and our laws. We have the right to do that on 31 October.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** Take control of our laws!

**John Redwood:** Yes, take control of our laws. [Laughter.] That is what we are arguing about today. I am explaining the extreme irony that this Parliament, which claims to believe in democracy, is deliberately trying to thwart our democracy by denying the result of the democratic decision that was made by the people, and that we said was theirs to make; and that this Parliament is trying to overturn the promises that many candidates—on the Labour side, in particular—made in the general election of 2017, and that they seem to have forgotten now that they are Members of Parliament.

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con):** I noticed the laughter from the Scots Nats at what my right hon. Friend said. In view of the very good sense that he was speaking, I invite the House to consider this. Is it not the case that under

the withdrawal agreement, during the transition period, decisions will be taken by the Council of Ministers to impose obligations and laws on the United Kingdom without our even being there, without any transcript, without any Hansard and almost invariably by consensus? Is not the whole thing a massive racket, the object of which is to put us in a state of subjugation—

**The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. Sir William, thank you, but we are running out of time.

**John Redwood:** My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point, which goes to the heart of the crucial issue about our democracy that the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady) raised from a sedentary position. One of the features that many of us found most objectionable about the withdrawal agreement was precisely that for a long and unspecified transition period that could have stretched on for many months—it was not clear what would end it—we would be under any new law that the European Union wished to impose on us, with no vote, voice or ability to influence that law.

At the moment, as a full member, we have some influence. We have a vote, and sometimes we manage to water down or delay something, but in the transition period we would have none of those rights. Any of the existing massive panoply of European law could be amended or changed by decisions of the European Court of Justice, and that would be binding on the United Kingdom. This is completely unacceptable for a democratic country—that, when a majority of people in a democratic referendum voted to take back control of their laws, their Parliament then says, “No; far too difficult a job for us. We don’t want to participate in this process.

We don’t want to take control of your laws. We want to delegate most of them, in many fields, to the European Union and have a foreign court developing our law for us in ways that we might find completely objectionable.” None of the amendments that I have just been mentioning, in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), the hon. Member for Aberavon (Stephen Kinnock) and others, intending to find a compromise, tackles this fundamental obstacle to the withdrawal agreement and to the idea that we can somehow negotiate our way out of the European Union if it does not think we just intend to leave.

**Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):** I am very grateful indeed to the right hon. Gentleman for taking an intervention. May I take him back to something that he said, because it is really very important? The right hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues have claimed—in the referendum, subsequently and tonight—that they are going to take back control of the borders. May I just ask him how he intends to take back control of South Armagh, and would he like to come to Crossmaglen and explain why it is all right for us to go out without a deal?

**The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. We are running out of time, and it would not be a proper debate if we did not hear from those on the Front Benches. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that and bring his speech to a conclusion very quickly.

**John Redwood:** Well, of course, if we just leave, we take back control of our borders. We can then decide whether we wish to do anything about it. We may wish to leave in place exactly all the existing arrangements. I am not making any recommendations that would embarrass the hon. Lady or her friends in Northern Ireland. We are very sensitive about that border. Indeed, the British Government have made it very clear that they see no reason to impose new barriers or difficulties on our side of the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland border at all. I am sure that will be very welcome to all those in this House who are seriously worried about this issue. It makes one wonder why the backstop was ever invented or necessary. Why is it so difficult for the European Union just to strip it out given that the EU has a sincere promise—agreed, I think, by all parts of this House—that we do not wish to impose new barriers on that border in a way that could be an obstacle to good relations and the peace process?

**Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con):** I wonder whether my right hon. Friend has ever had the experience of having builders in and not having given them an end date. What happens? The building work goes on and on and on. Is it not time that we told the builders, “The end date is 31 October. You finish the job—no ifs, no buts, no compromise”?

**The First Deputy Chairman:** We all know that it is great for emphasis to repeat things, but we are running out of time.

**John Redwood:** I will accept your guidance, Dame Eleanor.

In conclusion, these amendments do not fix the Bill. This Bill is extremely damaging to our democracy, undermines our negotiating position and would therefore achieve the opposite of what many of its proposers say they are trying to achieve.