

This election and Brexit

I have spoken to various Remain voters so far during this election. Many say to me they accept the result of the vote and just want the government to get on and do the best deal they can. Some tell me they voted Remain because they did worry about the possible economic consequences, and they are now relieved to see the bad predictions of recession this winter and collapse of confidence did not come true.

A few have told me they still cannot accept the decision and still fear there will be bad economic results in due course. They seem to think when we leave there will be all sorts of new barriers and restrictions imposed which will get in the way of normal travel, trade and collaboration across the Channel. They have perhaps been Lib Dem voters in the past and are often particularly concerned about academic and student links, research and cultural exchanges.

Let me try to reassure. The UK government has made very clear it wants a UK open to talent and university collaboration. The UK is not planning closed borders, making it more difficult for people to come here to courses in UK universities. We will still welcome tourists, visitor performers, people with good qualifications, entrepreneurs wanting to invest. The government will be generous with visas for talented and qualified people wanting to come to the UK to be faculty members, just as we are today with academics coming from the USA and other non EU countries. It will also want to see a continuation of the many musical, artistic and cultural links and exchanges that take place with EU and non EU countries today.

Nor do I expect the rest of the EU to want to stop EU citizens travelling to the UK or undertaking university work here. Under international law the EU would not be able to block people and ideas to and from the UK, nor can I imagine they would want to. There are no restrictions the EU could place just on the UK – they would have to be common restrictions against the rest of the world. I do not think the EU wants to cut itself off.

The UK has several world class leading universities and many other good ones. Their interests will be upheld by the government. More importantly, as the UK and the EU both pride themselves on a belief in freedom and on a pluralistic society, universities, individual students and academics will remain free to travel, study, work and collaborate in each other's countries as they see fit. I want to live in a free society. Such a society does not stop free institutions doing as they wish, and allows them under the law to pursue their aims and development. Some people think government is more important and more powerful than it is, and have a very dim view of how the EU will seek to behave.

Published and promoted by Fraser Mc Farland on behalf of John Redwood, both at 30 Rose Street Wokingham RG40 1XU