

Time to move on from EU policies

Let us remind Ministers that in U.K. government the civil service provides continuity. They will carry on energetically implementing past policies until the Cabinet or a Minister with the authority tells them policy is changing. It is the job of Ministers to propose new directions, argue them through against civil service objections and sell them to Parliament and the public.

In a few areas Ministers have seized the initiative and changed policy from the overarching EU laws and decisions which came to dominate most areas in recent years. The notable decision to opt out of the EU approach to vaccine development and procurement shows what can be done. Yet in all too many other cases Ministers are still to change and improve the EU approach which governs.

The Treasury for example has still not removed VAT from a range of items where the U.K. thought it wrong impose the tax. Why is there still VAT on boiler controls, heat pumps, drought excluder and insulation for starters? Why are we still reporting under the debt and deficit rules of Maastricht? Can't we have a pro growth anti inflation framework of our own to replace Maastricht austerity rules?

At DEFRA we still await details of how the U.K. is going to rebuild its fishing fleets and take control of our fish, catching sustainable quantities and landing them in the U.K. At Business there is no sign of a better regulation Bill to slim and improve the vast annals of EU legislation, some of which the U.K. opposed or wished to improve when first drafted. Pledging high standards is good, but improving the way they are defined and enforced would also be good. At the FCO There is little riposte to the abuses of trade between the EU and ourselves, particularly on the island of Ireland. We still do not have new procurement rules, nor a better self reliant energy policy.

We did not leave the EU to preserve all its legislative works from the outside. We left to make things better. Some Ministers need to alert officials to the huge opportunities which Brexit can bring.