

How modern borders work

The people who churn out the latest absurd version of Project Fear are stuck in a time warp. They think that if we leave and go to the WTO model our borders will immediately be congested with lorry drivers in queues waiting for a staff member at the border to carry out an inspection and calculate the tax there.

In the modern world most of the work is done away from the border by computer exchanges. Our border with the rest of the EU is already in their terms a complex border. Goods passing need to be charged to VAT, Excise needs to be levied on various items, the currency changes, and various UK domestic rules on health, safety and migrants have to be imposed. In the case of the majority of imports coming in from outside the EU there are also tariffs to levy.

Most coming across our border comes on big trucks organised by approved traders. The tax is sorted out from the electronic manifest away from the frontier. Any checks on products are carried out at the originating factory, and subject to inspection and spot checks there. Any additional requirements as we switch from EU to WTO can be done in the same way.

So what exactly is the problem? All imports will be under our control to deal with at our borders. We have no need to put in queues and special border checks. Those who say the EU will impose some version of the Napoleonic blockade on us when we leave also live in an imaginary world. It is strange the people who most love the EU expect it to try to start an economic war. They do not understand that even in the unlikely event they wanted to under international law and WTO rules that would not be possible. How would the EU seek to prevent a French cheese maker or a German car maker sending product to the UK? And how would that be legal?