

More false forecasts

Remain return to their Project Fear like moths returning to the heat of a light which might destroy them. Prior to the referendum they forecast big job losses, house price falls and a recession in the first winter after a No vote. We now know this was completely wrong. Using their language, these were "Catastrophic" forecasting errors. They took themselves "off the cliff edge" of bad forecasts.

This time they have decided to play it safer by going for long term forecasts. That means they cannot be proved wrong any time soon. It also means many Remain spokesmen and women will misrepresent what these new studies show. They all show us better off in ten years time, with or without Brexit. The so called losses are lower forecast gains, not actual losses. It also means if they assume marginal shortfalls in growth from Brexit, they add up over a long period of time to larger sums. Remain should understand this, as our growth rate throughout our time in the EEC/EU was slower on average than in the post War years prior to entry. They got their long term forecasts wrong when we entered, expecting faster growth. If Leave supporters played back their approach we could show substantial long term losses from membership. The big losses thanks to the Exchange Rate Mechanism disaster in the middle of our membership were particularly costly and were actual losses or declines in income and output, not just slower growth.

Instead of parroting imprecise long term forecasts from people who got their short term forecasts wrong in 2016-17, they should be trying to make amends. Journalists should cross examine them about how they can possibly know what our economy and the rest of the world will be like in ten or fifteen years time. If we leave and take back control properly next March we could pursue an economic, trade and spending policy that would give a good boost to our economy and its output. These forecasts concentrate on seeing negatives for our trade, without thinking about all the positives from saving the money we send to the EU, substituting home production for imports, and lowering tariffs in general when we set our own schedule. The main reasons they think growth will be a bit slower is assuming a net increase in trade barriers, and assuming much lower inward migration.

Project Fear did not work first time round for the Referendum. Each time it is tried it is even less effective, as we saw through the lies the previous time. It reminds us that Remain never have a positive case for membership of the EU or for a close economic partnership with it. They just bang on about what could go wrong, and assume the rest of the EU will behave as badly as possible towards us.

Tree planting in Mortimer

On Friday I joined Councillors and local residents for a tree planting in land adjacent to the Fairground Car Park. This is part of the national forest scheme. I am grateful to the Councillors and John Bull who organised this and found a suitable place for the planting.

Is this the EU's best offer?

The EU's bad offer to the UK has been conditioned by what the Prime Minister asked for. Mrs May and her team were trying to cherry pick in the way the EU told them not to, so they have ended up with no deal at all about the future relationship after two and half years of talks. If she had asked for a Free Trade Deal along the lines of Canada plus, with various arguments about how the Irish border would work we would be in a much better position. There are plenty of technical and practical ways of handling the border on existing technology, so we would have found out if these issues had been pressed whether the EU was up for a Free Trade deal or not. The Prime Minister's refusal to table a free trade agreement, and her long delay over pressing more practical solutions for the Irish border has led to the current impasse with the UK Parliament and the complete lack of a Future Partnership Agreement other than a few pages a vague aspirations and plenty of negotiation to come.

Once Parliament has voted down the Withdrawal Agreement – as MPs currently say they will – the UK government needs to return to the EU with the individual detailed issues that are best resolved prior to just leaving, and to table a full Free Trade Agreement. We will then find out for sure whether the EU is serious about an FTA or not, and can in the meantime get on with fulfilling the pledge to leave. Immediately anyway the UK government should publish its tariff schedule for March 29 2019, set out details of how we will run our own borders from that date, and provide the necessary permissions for continuing trade and activity.

Mrs May rightly says the country wants shot of all the arguments and delays about Brexit. That is another good reason why we must veto the agreement she has come up with, because it sentences us to an indefinite future of endless talks about our future partnership, shorn of our bargaining position by all the concessions made in the Withdrawal Agreement.

Wokingham Carnival

I went to the Carnival this afternoon, and joined the Mayor for carols and the ceremony of turning on the Christmas lights by the Town Hall. It was good to see the town busy for the event, and good that the rain stayed away during the crucial part of the proceedings. I would like to thank all involved in organising it, and all who participated in the procession and wider events.

The Prime Minister's letter

Mrs May's first ten points and last point are all ones I want to see happen. The trouble is they do not happen any time soon under the Withdrawal Agreement she wrongly wishes to lock us into and maybe never. Most of the rest of her points are things that re create many features of the E\$U after we have left in ways Leave voters do not wish to do, or vague promises of future co-operation which we can easily enjoy without signing this disastrous Treaty. Some are bizarre – "Gibraltar's sovereignty protected" – it was not at risk until the last minute concessions – and no hard border in Northern Ireland – I never thought the UK was planning one!

This letter and the further concession on Gibraltar are likely to tip more MPs against this Withdrawal Treaty. I remain strongly opposed.