

The EU still wants to keep us in the single market and customs union

Right from the start of the endless and so far fruitless negotiations between the UK and the EU there has been a fundamental divide. The UK has proposed a Free Trade Agreement between a sovereign UK and the EU, just as the EU has with countries like Canada and Japan. The UK has always been clear we wish to leave the single market and customs union, to be free to run our own international trade policy and to determine our own laws.

It is true that under Mrs May in the second phase of her government muddle was created by some in the UK negotiating team seeking to replicate many of the features of EU membership and being prepared to sacrifice sovereignty in return for this. Remain forces in the UK made regular trips to Brussels to offer their help in binding the UK back into much of the EU without formally being members, the worst possible outcome. If you have to comply with their laws you at least want some voice and vote in an effort to try to see off the worst changes they might propose.

Under Mr Johnson and Mr Frost we are assured the position has been clear. We want to be an independent country and are willing to be good friends and to offer a free trade area which would assist the EU more than the UK given the large imbalance in trade in their favour. There is no need for the UK to give them our fish, or to accept their laws, or to agree to arbitration of disputes entailing subservience to their court. Anyone of those would be a violation of the purpose and spirit of Brexit.

I did not expect to be still writing such obvious and necessary words this late in the year. I trust the government sticks to its promises. The EU has to make up its mind. If it is negotiating in good faith it will need to accept a Free Trade Agreement, not continued membership of the single market. It will have to abandon its wish to make our laws after we have left, and accept it will not arbitrate any future disputes in the ECJ.

The EU Treaty states the EU should pursue good neighbourliness and prosperity with neighbouring states, and should encourage the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade. It's a pity they do not think this applies to their relations with an independent UK, and a pity they have torn up the clause in the Political Agreement which states the future relationship will be based on a Free Trade Agreement.