

The last stage of the EU negotiations

The PM's critics say she does not know what she wants from the EU. Those who say this should read what she has written and spoken.

The following things are crystal clear in her statements:

The UK is leaving the EU on 29 March 2019

The UK is leaving the single market and the customs union – and this has been confirmed by two important votes in the Commons. She put Conservatives on a three line whip to vote down proposals to stay in the single market and customs union. It was also the clear statement of both campaigns in the referendum, and the position of the EU that you cannot stay in them without accepting all the other obligations of EU membership

The UK would like a comprehensive free trade agreement and trade partnership and is proposing no new barriers to our trade after we have left

She has also made clear – as she needs to do if we are to have a bargaining position – that no deal is better than a bad deal, and the UK will be ready to leave without a deal if necessary, though she strongly wants a deal.

I do not see how we can decide on a so called Transition period without knowing if there is something to transit to that both sides want. The March Council needs to be told we only accept transition if there is an Agreement and if it needs extra time to implement. The government should say to the EU we are offering no new barriers to trade – what barriers do they wish to impose on their trade with us? Were they to agree to no new barriers we could speedily translate that into a Free Trade Agreement and register it at the WTO.

I think the EU also needs to be told that the provisional generous agreement on money and other matters only comes into play if there is a comprehensive free trade deal which the UK likes. As someone who does not want to pay the EU anything extra, I would need persuading that any Agreement was value for money for what is an ex gratia payment.