

# Brexit speech last night

One of the first votes I cast as a young man was to vote to leave the EEC in 1975. I read the Treaty of Rome and realised this was no simple common market. I thought we were being lied to by the establishment who told us we could veto anything we did not like and would not lose our sovereignty, as the Treaty made clear wide ranging ambitions by the Europeans on their chosen path to "ever closer union".

I accepted the democratic decision of the UK voters and did my best for many years to believe in the common market and to limit the EU's activities to those of a common market. I only called for a second referendum a generation later when several new Treaties had transferred large powers to the EU and it was quite obvious this was well removed from the common market people thought they had voted for. It was helping lead the campaign to keep the pound that marked the turning point. The UK's eventual rejection of the main feature of European integration meant we had to seek a new and different relationship from those countries signed up to the federal state agenda. I launched the idea that joining a single currency was like sharing a bank account with the neighbours. It turned out to be an accurate metaphor, and one which most UK voters rejected as a policy for our country. The Euro predictably caused intense economic distress in various Euro countries.

Tonight is an historic occasion. We are well on the way to being an independent self governing nation again. The government now needs to be firm as well as friendly to the EU in the talks ahead. We should not make any more concessions. Our fish are not be bargained away again, our laws must be under our sole control, and our money repatriated. The EU needs a Free Trade Agreement more than we do as it is such a big exporter to us, so we must stand firm in negotiation. The UK has been Treasure Island for the EU, both as a source of tax revenue for their plans, and as a great market for their exports. They should now be decent and honour their promise of a Free Trade Agreement with no penal clauses.

When we leave the Implementation period at the end of the year I will celebrate more. We will once again be that free independent country we were for centuries before we joined the EU. We will be a world leader for free trade, peace and democracy. We will regain our vote and our voice on international bodies. We will be true to our traditions of being engaged with Europe but not governed by Europe's main continental powers. The UK has long championed the rights of smaller nations, democracy and the importance of national self determination in Europe.

We will be free to set out own taxes, so we can remove VAT from green products, from repairs to charitable buildings and from female hygiene products.

We are already shaking off the Maastricht debt requirements as the central driver of our economic policy and replacing it with the aims of promoting growth and prosperity.

We will be able to pass the laws that people want, and spend all our tax revenues on our priorities.

I always thought myself lucky to be born into a country that so valued and defended freedom and democracy. I was always humbled by the knowledge of the sacrifices my grandparents and parents made with their generations to keep us free.

Tonight I am again proud to be British, and optimistic that we can do so much better once we have truly taken back control.

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## My intervention during the debate on the Direct Payments to Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Bill, 28th January 2020

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** Will the Minister confirm that as we move on to the new policy, there will be an emphasis on growing more food at home for import substitution, so that these general moneys can lead on to moneys that help us to build a bigger domestic food industry?

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr George Eustice):** My right hon. Friend will be aware that we have presented a separate Agriculture Bill, which has had its First Reading. It sets out all the powers we would need to reform agriculture policy. The direct payment regulations before us bring the CAP into UK law and on to the UK statute book, and in the Agriculture Bill, there are powers to modify these regulations, so that we can remove the rough edges and simplify them. There are also powers in the Agriculture Bill to strike a very different course for our agriculture—a course based on payment for public goods, but also on providing farmers with grants to invest in new technology, so that they can improve their profitability or add value to their produce. That Bill also recognises that our food security is vital, and commits the Government to reviewing it every five years. That, however, is obviously a matter that we will debate in the coming weeks and months; I want to return to this direct payments Bill.

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## Brexit day

At last we leave the EU. It is now quite possible to leave fully at the end of December this year and reap the benefits of Brexit. We can be better off out, and we will restore self government.

It's nineteen months late , and we still stay under their rules and budgets for the rest of this year, so it's not what I wanted or voted for. In the end I accepted the verdict of the election and the new Parliament, as there was no support for just leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement which I thought the better option. The delay has been financially penal, forcing the UK to contribute around £1bn a month for many more months. It has been corrosive of our politics, setting the last Parliament against the people. It undermined trust in many MPs and the Parliament as a whole prior to the election, as so many MPs broke their promises to respect the referendum and help get us out .

Mr Cameron promised he would send the Withdrawal letter promptly after the vote, but failed to do so. Mrs May let Parliament and courts delay our exit letter further. She then promised us an exit in March 2019, with a good deal or with no deal. She too broke her word and kept us in, under pressure from a hostile and broken Parliament.

The new Parliament has a clear majority to leave, and a clear majority that Leave means an exit from the single market and Customs Union as well as from the EU Treaty which we leave this week. That is all very positive. It is important now that the UK government is firm and strong, as well as polite and positive in its dealings with the EU. There must be no sacrifice of our fish, no offers of more money, no acceptance of continuing ECJ jurisdiction. They need a Free Trade Agreement more than we do, and are more likely to grant one if we are firm. The UK has given far too much ground in past negotiations under Mrs May. The new team should table a Free Trade Agreement and explain we do not have to pay to trade.

The world teems with opportunities for us once we are fully out. Today is an important step along that road.

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## Nationalisation of railway franchises does not solve many of the problems

Yesterday saw the government announce the takeover of the Northern Rail franchise by the government from March. They tell me the aim is to introduce private sector capital and management again on a new basis. They warned against expecting too much from taking over the franchise.

Too many delays, cancelled services and old rolling stock have blighted the service. Many of the problems were entirely outside the control of the franchise holder, and will be no more under the control of the government franchise manager.

The Spanish company supplying new trains failed to meet deadlines for deliveries, forcing the franchise holder to battle on with old stock.

Network Rail, a nationalised business, failed to lengthen platforms in time to allow delivery and use of other new trains.

Some of the delays were caused by Network Rail failures with track and signals.

The franchise holder had problems with the new timetables in 2018 which were required of it from the rail authorities.

Various rail franchises have difficulties in securing Trade Union consent to new ways of working. There is no guarantee the Unions will change their mind over these disputes once they are dealing direct with a government franchise manager.

The bulk of the railway is already nationalised. Many of the delays throughout the network are caused by track or signal failures in the nationalised industry, or in a few cases by people and even vehicles intruding on track or disrupting operation of the system.

Nationalisation is no easy answer, and in the case of Northern it does not suddenly resolve the big issues over train delivery and driver availability that are part of the problem.

The UK needs to improve its supply chain for the many of the new trains the big surge in rail investment will require, and ensure most of the work is carried out in the UK.

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## Getting infrastructure done

The government wishes to crank up the scale and pace of new infrastructure investment in the UK. Many agree we need better railway links, more road capacity, more schools, hospitals and houses given the rising population, faster broadband and more water and electricity supply.

The government inherits a very expensive large railway project. The costs has spiralled before much work has been done on the ground. The eventual completion of the project linking northern cities to the southern and Midlands sections will not be complete until 2040. That is in five full Parliaments time. Who knows what our needs will then be, what technology will

then be available for personal transport, and what the size of the population will then be.

HS2 is a reminder of what is wrong with UK infrastructure procurement. It takes far too long. It is highly contentious with the public. It is ruinously expensive. The governments that back it and take the flak in the early stages for it do not enjoy the benefits of its completion.

The Taxpayers Alliance has now drawn up a schedule of many transport projects we could afford if we cancelled the big line. Some of these are ready to go, and some are very popular in their localities. They are all much smaller than HS2 but taken together could provide a lot of improvement.

In order to speed up infrastructure investment there are some rules the government could adopt that would make it easier. Backing schemes that are strongly supported in an area would assist. Offering compensation as part of the plan to those who will be inconvenienced or adversely affected by the development would be a great help in speeding projects and reducing opposition. If someone's house is close to a planned new rail line they should be offered enough money to be able to move if they don't like the noise.

It is easier to put in broadband, water and power investments than to put in new roads or railway lines, as they have much less impact on people. They are much needed and can attract wholly or mainly private finance to pay for them. The government needs to expedite permissions and licences.