

# A storm is coming

In the fishing industry, we expect winter storms – they are part and parcel of the job, Is our government, however, aware of the looming storm of its own making?

The best news of 2017 was our Government's success in moving the Brexit negotiations from phase one to phase two, although in reality we are only moving on to to phase one and a half, because the transition/implementation period was not on the original agenda and this is what will create the storm.

Storms expose weaknesses, and for the Government it will be its entire Brexit strategy, focussed on this supposed "deep and special relationship." Just to remind ourselves, Mrs May first used this phrase in her Lancaster House speech. **"The United Kingdom would seek to secure a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union".**

But there has been nothing of any substance to give us any idea of the foundations upon which this new relationship/partnership is to be based. Is it,

1. like the present – in other words, almost as good a deal as if we were still a full EU member? or
2. starting with a clean sheet of paper?

It is fair to say that, given all the hype over this phrase, that the electorate thinks it is going to be the first of these options whereas the truth is that it is more like the second. When the penny drops, there will be immense disappointment and indeed, anger.

So the storm clouds are building over continental Europe, ready to lash the British Isles. We can expect them to arrive around the end of this month – January 2018. At the eye of the storm is the harsh reality that the unity and solidarity of the 27 EU member States comes first. In order that this will



not be compromised, the EU's proposal for a 21 month transition period will see us totally subservient to our continental cousins. No wonder Barnier was delighted when the UK asked for a transitional period. It suits the EU very nicely.

The EU will spare no effort in its battle to save "Le project" which, it must be emphasized, is primarily a political not an economic project. We have been told that as far as access to the Single Market is concerned, there is to be no cherry picking by the UK, yet this is exactly what the EU itself is doing in areas such as defense and security.

The recommendations being issued by the EU institutions for the operation of this proposed 21 month transition are horrific. We will have no representation in the EU institutions, but will have to accept the full EU *acquis* during this period. We will be back under the Common Fisheries Policy for another 21 months and charged a hefty bill for these "privileges". Furthermore, who can guarantee that a new trading arrangement will be signed and sealed by the end of the 21 months? The EU has indicated that it is willing to consider an extension to the transitional period in which case, we may never leave in reality, only in name.

It is easy to be cynical about this transitional period. After all, why did we vote to leave? Brexit is about control coming back to our elected representatives, not further subservience to the EU.

Some Westminster MP's are beginning to grasp that we could end up wasting 21 months under these arrangements and on 1st. January 2021 we could be no further forward – in fact, we would be heavily weakened as these 21 months would give EU companies time to find alternative suppliers within the 27. Other MPs are hiding behind this phrase "deep and special relationship" – as if Brexit is nothing to do with them, The bottom line, however, is that responsibility rests with **every**



MP. There is no mandate to give our country away again, even under the guise of a “transitional arrangement”. Thankfully the plans will be put to the vote, so we will know where each MP stands and how many of them are truly committed to honouring the Prime Minister’s pledge that “Brexit must mean Brexit”.