

CHRISTMAS BULLETIN – ‘The Twelve steps to Brexit’

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CLEAR WATER PARTNERSHIP

CHRISTMAS BULLETIN

‘The Twelve steps to Brexit’

‘On the first day of Brexit the EU gave to me...’

Very little indeed. And not much in the intervening period either.

As we round the year off with a farewell Christmas Bulletin to our followers and subscribers, we identify key areas of Brexit-related policy where the UK remains tied to the European Union, three years after we officially left.

To mark the festive period, we measure the promises which were made on our departure against the reality of what’s been delivered in that time.

In an end-of-year-round-up we scrutinise government progress across twelve critical areas of policy as the UK locks horns with the EU once again in the hope of finally bringing these tortuous negotiations to a much-needed and long-awaited conclusion in 2023.

On one thing we can all agree: Brexit is NOT yet done.

ON SOVEREIGNTY

‘Restoration of our money, our laws and our borders.’

Who could forget that rallying cry? It inspired seventeen million to cast their votes accordingly and yet the fine print continues to undermine the pledge.

1. On money

The UK continues to pay into the EU Budget. The Brexit divorce bill amounted to **£34.1bn**, of which £10bn was paid in 2021, with an estimated £19bn outstanding for the period to 2028, as well as other net liabilities amounting to £5bn to 2064.

2. On EU-retained Law

As Martin Howe KC has established in a key-note speech to the *Bruges Group*, it remains entirely sensible to retain EU-law across a range of areas at the point of departure and then convert them into UK domestic law.

However, owing to the disastrously negotiated terms of the European Withdrawal Act (2018), there are swathes of UK law which remain under the jurisdiction of the EU courts for no justifiable reason at all.

It is high time that a time-limit be imposed on such legislation to concentrate minds and incentive a lethargic civil service to meet an appointed deadline.

3. On borders

This remains the greatest betrayal for Brexit-voters who see

the promises trashed every day both in terms of the boats coming across the Channel but also in the sheer numbers of authorised migrants under the EU Settlement Scheme. This is NOT what people expected or voted for.

4. On Food, clothing & footwear

A key Brexit pledge and a direct appeal to lower-income earners facing a cost-of-living crisis with a promise of tariff reductions on a range of vital consumer goods.

In the current climate, this appeal is particularly relevant which is why the pace of tariff-reduction with new-world food producers is so frustrating, as we highlighted in an affiliated Bulletin article [here](#).

5. On Fishing

‘Taking back control’ of our coastal waters was another key pledge by Brexiteers throughout the Referendum campaign and remains a central plank in any post-Brexit agreement. And yet, post-Brexit data suggests the policy has gone into **reverse**.

In terms of UK tonnage, the figures for the first half of 2022 were **DOWN** 10% compared to the same period the year before.

At the same time, the value of fish landed at UK ports by foreign fishing vessels **increased by 58%** during the first half of 2022 compared with the same period in 2021.

6. On VAT-reductions on Energy

In similar fashion, Sir John Redwood MP indicated his own frustration at the lack of action by HMG in relation to energy. Freed at last from the EU compulsory levy it's high time the government acted unilaterally and quickly.

7. On the Northern Ireland Protocol

As everyone knows, Northern Ireland remains locked inside the EU Customs Union and has required unilateral legislation to ensure that Northern Ireland remains fully and properly a part of the United Kingdom, and not hived off as a political pawn in current negotiations between the UK and NI.

The actions of the EU in relation to the issue of border controls between the Province and NI are entirely disproportionate and are being used as a tool to leverage further concessions from the UK government.

This must be comprehensively resolved in the new year and no concession can possibly be granted by HMG to the EU in relation to this matter.

8. On lowering tax

Freed at last from the clutches of the EU to set our own taxes, we have urged the government to adopt a much more flexible and progressive approach as the best means to boost economic growth.

As we have repeatedly argued, fortune is on the side of those who err towards lighter regulation and lower taxation as the preferred model for higher economic growth. Progress on this

issue appears to have gone into reverse, with Britons on average now paying higher levels of tax than at any time since the end of the War.

9. On deregulation

As we have said before any regulation needs to be proportionate and should be designed to maintain competitive and safe markets. Anything beyond that should be abolished, with no excuse for any further delay.

10. On defence

Just when you thought the UK was taking back control, we can verify that the UK is set to join the EU's most important defence projects – **PESCO** – this is the Permanent Structured Co-operation on Defence.

As the EU Commission itself has acknowledged, ***“The Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO, is one of the building blocks of the EU's Defence policy.”***

If that is not a direct slap in the face to NATO, it certainly looks like a rival institution. Dividing the West at a moment like this when Europe is fighting for its survival is sheer madness. The EU need to be brought into line and stand again underneath the NATO umbrella.

11. On illegal immigration

It remains front and centre the most pressing issue of all in relation to Europe. Taking control of our borders was a key

Referendum pledge – initially to control the flow of authorised workers into the UK.

Since the summer of 2020, however illegal immigration has simply exploded and is now the urgent personal priority of the Prime Minister himself. Robust, domestic, stand-alone legislation ought to be sufficient to enable the government to address the political problem. Far greater numbers also need to be recruited to process the backlog of claims which have been on the rise for years.

We were told 20 years ago that the Home Office is not for purpose. Since then, things have got worse, leading to our final observation.

12. On ‘opposition from within’

Regrettably, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the difficulties facing the government say as much about the internal resistance to change on its own side as it does about any obstruction from the EU itself.

Institutional apathy or even antipathy pervades entire Whitehall departments. Too often we hear of turf wars between departmental ministers and their unelected officials and resistance to anything that challenges pervading mandarin orthodoxy.

Lord Frost, himself a former civil servant, attests to this culture in a recent article and says urgent action is required if the government of the day is ever to get its business done.

If that requires a massive recruitment campaign as we suggested earlier to break the dead-lock at the Home Office and finally to get on top of the migrant crisis, so be it. All options must be considered at this stage.

But it is a sobering thought that domestic inertia may be the chief reason for the current impasse, which leaves those of us campaigning on a straightforward promise to get Brexit done deeply frustrated at the lack of progress on so many fronts.

CONCLUSION

As we have said before, all we can do is to continue to hold the government to account for the promises they have made and try to ensure that in the weeks and months ahead, their words are backed up by deeds irrespective of internal resistance.

And on that we trust they will match their deeds with words. Only time will tell.

Meanwhile, on behalf of us all at the *CIBUK-Clear Water Partnership* it simply remains for us to thank you for your support throughout the year and until we meet again in 2023, to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With all best wishes.

Ben Philips – Communications Director – CIBUK, Clear Water Partnership

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