

Prime Minister says Brexit will be based on 'no deal' – what the Scottish politicians say

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has said that any trade talks with the EU are at an end.

This is the text of the speech relating the latest stage in the negotiations with the EU that the Prime Minister read to camera earlier today:

"We left the EU on January 31 and delivered on the largest democratic mandate in the history of this country.

"And since then we have been in a transition period obeying EU law, paying our fees – as a non-voting member – working on the future relationship we hope to enjoy with our friends and partners from January.

"And from the outset we were totally clear that we wanted nothing more complicated than a Canada-style relationship, based on friendship and free trade.

"To judge by the latest EU summit in Brussels that won't work for our EU partners. They want the continued ability to control our legislative freedom, our fisheries, in a way that is obviously unacceptable to an independent country.

"And since we have only ten weeks until the end of the transition period on January 1, I have to make a judgment about the likely outcome and to get us all ready.

“And given that they have refused to negotiate seriously for much of the last few months, and given that this summit appears explicitly to rule out a Canada-style deal, I have concluded that we should get ready for January 1 with arrangements that are more like Australia’s based on simple principles of global free trade.

“And we can do it, because we always knew that there would be change on January 1 whatever type of relationship we had.

“And so now is the time for our businesses to get ready, and for hauliers to get ready, and for travellers to get ready.

“And of course we are willing to discuss the practicalities with our friends where a lot of progress has already been made, by the way, on such issues as social security, and aviation, nuclear cooperation and so on.

“But for whatever reason it is clear from the summit that after 45 years of membership they are not willing – unless there is some fundamental change of approach – to offer this country the same terms as Canada.

“And so with high hearts and complete confidence we will prepare to embrace the alternative.

“And we will prosper mightily as an independent free trading nation, controlling our own borders, our fisheries, and setting our own laws.

“And in the meantime the government will be focussing on tackling COVID and building back better so that 2021 is a year of recovery and renewal.

“Thank you very much.”

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: “It is beyond belief that in the midst of a global pandemic and deep recession the Prime Minister is telling Scotland to get ready for a disastrous No Deal Brexit.

“With less than three months until the end of the transition period, businesses and people across Scotland will be in despair at this extraordinary statement.

“At best this is reckless brinkmanship. At worst it means the UK Government is now actively pursuing a No Deal outcome.

“The reality is Scotland’s economy is going to be damaged by a further needless hit to jobs at the worst possible time, with either a thin trade deal or no deal now the only possible outcomes.

“A completely unnecessary Brexit shock will hit many businesses already struggling with the Covid-19 crisis.

“A No Deal outcome would be particularly disastrous. Scotland could see heavy tariffs on goods, which for some sectors would be crippling.

“Because of the hard-line Brexit position adopted by the UK Government any outcome is going to be damaging, but a No Deal will mean the biggest hit to jobs. The Prime Minister must withdraw his threat to force the hardest possible Brexit on Scotland.

“The Scottish Government view is clear – the best future for Scotland is to become an independent country.”

‘People are sick and tired of PM’s Brexit melodrama’

Former Secretary of State for Scotland and Orkney and Shetland MP, Alistair Carmichael, has condemned Boris Johnson’s “Brexit melodrama” after the Prime Minister said that the country must prepare for a no-deal exit from the transition period. The Prime Minister’s spokesperson later said that there was “no point” in EU negotiators coming to London for the next round of trade talks.

A no-deal Brexit has been estimated to cost the UK approximately 8% of long-term GDP, with agriculture one of the hardest-hit sectors.

Mr Carmichael said: "To go from "oven-ready" to "no deal" in less than nine months suggests utter incompetence from the Prime Minister and his government. We were told this would be the easiest trade deal in history – the bar was set low and somehow Boris Johnson has still failed to get over it.

"People are sick and tired of this Brexit melodrama from the government. The deal was supposed to be done months ago and with the pandemic back at the top of our priorities we cannot afford these distractions. Does Johnson really think people want to have to worry about a no deal scenario on top of everything else we are dealing with?

"Many will suspect that this is yet more bluster from a feckless Prime Minister who has never planned more than five minutes ahead and now seeks to blame anyone else he can point to. He chose the deadline – he chose to pick needless fights over the Withdrawal Agreement he signed. The buck stops with him and it is his government we shall hold to account if we crash out."

Chaotic approach

Scottish Greens Co-Leader Patrick Harvie MSP said: "The Westminster government's chaotic approach to exiting the EU will have dire consequences for the people of Scotland, who let's not forget have repeatedly rejected the Brexit project. Scotland doesn't want Brexit, and dragging us out of the EU against our will was always appalling, but for the Prime Minister to do so on a cliff edge in the middle of a pandemic is criminal.

"There are so many areas of concern about this back of a fag packet Brexit shambles, that it is difficult to know where to

begin. Boris Johnson has so far failed to explain what plans are in place for stockpiling medicines, and as we revealed last month he has provided no funding for The Scottish Government to do so either. It is vital that he explains today exactly what measures are being taken to ensure that everyone in the UK will continue to have access to the medicines they require come January. It's clearer than ever that the only thing the UK Government has to offer Scotland is contempt."