



Outcome with no upsides not much better than “no deal”

● WHEN the Government announced on Christmas Eve that it had reached a deal with the European Union, Michael Heseltine, a former deputy leader of the Conservative Party said: “We must welcome the news that Brexit does not end in the chaos of no deal, but only with the sense of relief of a condemned man informed that his execution has been commuted to a life sentence.”

“No deal” was always the worst option, but this deal is not much better. It has no upsides. It offers no way for Britain to influence Europe’s future. It gives businesses no reason to invest in Britain.

This is not the full and comprehensive trade deal that Britain needed to minimise the damage caused by departing from the European Union. January will see further disruption to trade, and that disruption will not be temporary but will continue for the foreseeable future.

In the long term, Britain’s reduced

access to European Union markets will make Britain a less attractive place to locate jobs and investment.

The deal gives Britain tariff-free and quota-free access to the European Union, but this is far from the frictionless access that business wanted.

Importing and exporting to the European Union will become more bureaucratic and complex.

Supply chains will struggle — putting Britain at a competitive disadvantage; and if Britain diverges from European standards in future, the European Union will be able to impose tariffs and quotas on goods. Furthermore, service industries will see little direct benefit.

And British citizens will lose access to valued European schemes such as the Erasmus scheme that enabled students to study in different European countries; and the European health insurance card that enabled British people to access health services in other European

Union countries on the same basis as other European Union citizens and without taking out insurance policies.

These new arrangements with the EU have been created by dismantling Britain’s membership of the European Union and other institutions; obstructing a softer, better Brexit such as Theresa May’s deal; and now agreeing to this new deal.

Britain could also have stayed in the European single market and the customs union despite leaving the EU itself.

This has been the deliberate choice of the British Government and has not been caused by opposition parties, remain voters or the European Union.

This is not only a worse deal than the one we had as a EU member; but a worse deal than we could have had with a different approach to Brexit.

ADRIAN WAITE
(Chairman, Penrith and the Border Liberal-Democrats)

This letter was published in the ‘Cumberland & Westmorland Herald’ on 2nd January 2021.