

## **Keir Starmer MP, Leader of the Labour Party, Labour's 5-point plan to Make Brexit Work**

Thank you.

It's a real privilege to be here tonight.

I want to start by thanking everyone here at the Embassy.

Especially Adrian, for the immense contribution he has made as Ambassador to Britain.

Adrian has always been honest and constructive in working through many challenges and will be missed across the political spectrum.

Adrian, we thank you and wish you the very best for your retirement next month.

And to Charles Grant whose vast expertise on European relations has been unrivalled for decades.

Charles has not only been a valuable source of knowledge for me over the years but also, a trusted friend.

In that time, the world has changed beyond recognition and so has your work.

For many 1996 was a time of optimism. From the Baltic shipyards of Poland to the villages of southern Bulgaria, tens of millions of people who had laboured under the yoke of tyranny were looking forward to a European future.

Barriers were coming down; economies were beginning to thrive.

Mobile phones were becoming commonplace, personal computers were being switched on to the internet and these new technologies were connecting the world at a stroke.

The totemic battles of the previous generation were being wrapped up.

The Cold War was over. Apartheid had been ended. Peace was coming to Northern Ireland.

Here in Britain, a deeply unpopular Conservative Prime Minister found himself mired in sleaze, weakened by his failures and a slave to the right wing of his party.

(OK, so maybe not everything is completely different...)

Then, just as now the Labour Party had put itself in position to be the next government staking out the centre ground and building plans to take the country forward into a new era.

The big difference with 1996 is that we have lost that sense of optimism.

After a decade of low growth under the Tories Taxes are rising and rampant inflation is damaging households and businesses.

In 2022, Britain is stuck.

Stuck with an economy where wages have flatlined and household bills are going through the roof.

Stuck with broken public services that no longer work for those they serve.

Stuck in queues for passports or driving licences.

Stuck waiting for delayed trains and buses.

Stuck on hold as we try and get a doctor's appointment.

Britain is also stuck with a government that has no plan.

One that was elected on a promise to end Brexit but has now decided to re-open those old divisions in order to ensure Britain remains stuck with this failed Prime Minister.

While the Conservatives are flailing around, lashing out and attempting to sow division Labour has been claiming the centre ground of British politics once again.

Not a mushy place of compromise but a place driven by purpose a place driven by optimism.

Our driving mission is to get Britain's economy growing again so we can ensure the people and the places who for too long have lost out are once again revitalised and re-energised.

I am going to be saying a lot more about how we achieve that in the weeks and months to come.

But the first step in doing so is to ensure Britain thrives in its new role in the world by ensuring we Make Brexit Work.

There are some who say "we don't need to make Brexit work - we need to reverse it."

I couldn't disagree more.

Because you cannot move forward or grow the country or deliver change or win back the trust of those who have lost faith in politics if you're constantly focused on the arguments of the past.

We cannot afford to look back over our shoulder because all the time we are doing that we are missing what is ahead of us.

So let me be very clear.

Under Labour, Britain will not go back into the EU.

We will not be joining the single market.

We will not be joining a customs union.

Now, I know some people don't want to hear that, but it is my job to be frank and honest - you will always get that with me.

The reason I say this is simple.

Nothing about revisiting those rows will help stimulate growth or bring down food prices or help British business thrive in the modern world.

It would simply be a recipe for more division, it would distract us from taking on the challenges facing people and it would ensure Britain remained stuck for another decade.

Under Labour, that simply will not happen.

What you will get under Labour is a plan.

One that will deliver on the opportunities Britain has, sort out the poor deal Boris Johnson signed and end the Brexit divisions once and for all.

It is a proper plan to Make Brexit Work.

Now, I know I'd never be allowed to take this stage without telling you what that plan looks like, and you wouldn't expect the lawyer in the room to skim on the detail.

So let me set out for you how it works.

The first step is clear and obvious.

We must sort out the Northern Ireland Protocol.

If you're going to Make Brexit Work, that has to be the starting point.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure to spend a week in Dublin and Belfast.

Businesses there are clear - they can make it work.

The solutions are there, the desire is there. What is lacking is trust.

That crucial ingredient that has always characterised progress in relations between our islands has been eroded by this government.

Labour will change that.

We will be the honest broker our countries need; we will get the protocol working and we will make it the springboard to securing a better deal for the British people.

As well as building trust, Labour would eliminate most border checks created by the Tory Brexit deal with a new veterinary agreement for Agri-products between the UK and EU.

And we will work with business to put in place a better scheme to allow low-risk goods to enter Northern Ireland without unnecessary checks.

The second step we would take is to tear down unnecessary barriers.

Outside of the Single Market and a Customs Union we will not be able to deliver complete frictionless trade with the EU.

But there are things we can do to make trade easier.

Labour would extend that new veterinary agreement to cover all the UK, seeking to build on agreements and mechanisms already in place between the EU and other countries - benefiting our exporters at a stroke.

There was a story on the news the other day about a 'wet wipe island' that has formed in the Thames. Made of fat and oil and household rubbish one metre deep and the size of two tennis courts it is blocking the flow of the river and changing the shape of the riverbed.

You couldn't imagine a better metaphor for the Tory Brexit deal.

They have created a hulking 'fatberg' of red tape and bureaucracy.

One that is hampering the flow of British business.

We will break that barrier down, unclog the arteries of our economy and allow trade to flourish once more.

The third step will be to support Britain's world-leading industries.

That means mutual recognition of professional qualifications ensuring our services can compete and restoring access to funding and vital research programmes.

Step four would be to ensure we keep Britain safe.

For too long, the Government has been blasé about European security.

The actions of Vladimir Putin must jolt us back into reality.

Because in the modern world if one of us is not safe then none of us are.

Strengthening security cooperation with our friends and allies is vital.

I know from first-hand experience during my time as Director of Public Prosecutions that we cannot take risks with terrorism, organised crime and people trafficking.

That's why Labour will seek new security arrangements to defend our borders.

It's why we will share data, intelligence, and best practice and it's why we will set up joint intelligence working here and in Europe.

The final part of our plan will be to invest in Britain.

The lesson of the last decade is that if we are to achieve economic growth and see the benefits flowing to every part of our country, we cannot simply be bystanders.

The Tory plan as set out by Jacob Rees-Mogg is about cutting standards, regulations, and protections before stepping back and gawping at the power of the market.

This simply will not work.

It is a sure-fire way for Britain to lose the global race for jobs and trade.

It will exacerbate the problems we already face; it will not deliver on the promise of Brexit.

Labour's plan looks very different.

We will work hand-in-hand with business to bring the good, clean jobs of the future to our shores, harnessing the power of government alongside the ingenuity of our brilliant private sector.

Together, we will open up new markets and create new opportunities.

The Government have missed Brexit opportunities time and time again.

It beggars belief that during a cost-of-living crisis they still haven't cut VAT on energy bills.

Labour will be sharper than this.

We will use our flexibility outside of the EU to ensure British regulation is adapted to suit British needs.

That is Labour's plan to Make Brexit Work.

It is a plan that puts the divisions of the past behind us and seizes on the challenges and opportunities of the future.

It is a plan that that helps everyone from exporters to musicians thrive.

It's a plan to reverse the Tory spiral of low-growth and high-tax.

A plan that puts Britain in the best place to compete on the global stage.

A plan that will help us achieve our central mission of delivering economic growth to Britain and spreading it throughout the country.

There is something even more crucial than that.

In 2016, the British people voted for change.

The very narrow question that was on the ballot paper – leaving or remaining in the EU – is now in the past.

But the hope that underpinned that vote - the desire for a better, fairer, more equitable future for our country is no closer to being delivered.

We will not return to freedom of movement to create short term fixes, instead we will invest in our people and our places and deliver on the promise our country has.

If we are to restore faith in politics as a force for good, we must now get on with delivering on that promise.

The Tories have no idea how to do it.

Labour does.

Labour has a plan.

And this plan, a plan to Make Brexit Work is the first stage of delivering on that change and delivering a better future for our country.

Ends



