Twitter Thread by David Henig



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So many stories of new barriers to trade between UK and EU, but you might be thinking at some point these will run out. The government is certainly hoping so. Well they may slow down, but trade relations and regulations are not static, and changes will lead to further problems.

The likelihood of continued trade problems for a £650 bn trade relationship is why there should be a huge cross-government effort led by the Foreign Office and Department for International Trade to put in place the necessary resources to seek best results.

There isn't.

So the UK's relationship with the EU currently consists of two not particularly good deals and no consistent effort to manage current problems or prevent future ones. Joint committees are a second order problem to putting in place the right internal structures.

But that's been the consistent UK problem in relations with the EU since 2016. Lack of focus on getting the right internal structures, people, asks, strategy, too much attention on being tough and a single leader.

News just in. This doesn't necessarily mean the right structure being put into UK-EU relations. I suspect Frost's main role is to ensure no renegotiations with the EU.

Also, wonder what this says about the PM's trust in Michael Gove? https://t.co/7VOJTATToP

> NEW: David Frost is joining Boris Johnson\u2019s Cabinet! The peer has been appointed a minister at the Cabinet Office, effective March 1.
>
> Frost will also chair the partnership council overseeing the UK-EU trade deal and oversee reform to "maximise on the opportunities of Brexit"
>
> — Sebastian Payne (@SebastianEPayne) February 17, 2021

In fact Frost takes over Gove's role in EU relations. Buckle up, I suspect this means turbulence ahead. Frost appears much more hardline in thinking than Gove, though end result of UK climbdown has typically been the same. https://t.co/5PUvsAQcgu

> And will take over from Michael Gove as UK co-chair of the main committees established in the Withdrawal Agreement and the Trade and Co-operation Agreement. (It had to be done by a minister.) https://t.co/2qhqjJzR1V
>
> — Adam Fleming (@adamfleming) February 17, 2021

This tallies with my instinct. In particular I think Frost had a hand in the rather strong Northern Ireland letter sent by Gove, was probably not happy Gove then backed down completely over the content... https://t.co/kDiLc45wtJ

> Hmmm. Lord Frost\u2019s appointment as a minister a sign of disharmony not harmony, I\u2019m told.
>
> - Frost was unhappy with Cummings/Cain going. Now factional tensions revive after Gove allies Henry Newman and Simone Finn arrive in No10, plus Frost miffed at Gove brexit committee role
>
> — Sam Coates Sky (@SamCoatesSky) February 17, 2021

I am far from clear that today means Lord Frost will now be Cabinet lead for the whole EU relationship, as in managing all the day to day issues. Still much to be worked out I suspect. https://t.co/yCK7sTBaki

> One of the big questions about \U0001f447shenanigans is what it means for who runs EU-UK relations.
>
> Inside the Cabinet Office there\u2019s a new Europe secretariat being set up, under a Director General. It\u2019s the remnants of Taskforce Europe. Frost was due to be involved. https://t.co/SXXU0TLkv7
>
> — Sam Coates Sky (@SamCoatesSky) February 17, 2021

Also just considering the possibility that Michael Gove might want David Frost to own all the consequences of his Brexit deal, and the compromises that will be required. But surely such thinking is too cynical?

Personalities aside I agree with this. Negotiating and operating a deal are not the same job, and it makes a lot of sense to hand over. But the politics I suspect do not allow. https://t.co/2FtXpxQyVW

> And I *know* it\u2019s a radical thought, but might it not have been better to have given the Brexit responsibility to someone\u2026 who could look at all of this afresh?
>
> — Jon Worth (@jonworth) February 17, 2021

This is important on UK-EU relations. Problems including:

1/ Northern Ireland protocol
2/ Existing business lost / compensation
3/ Financial services equivalence
4/ Large business asking for stronger EU ties

5/ Potential new EU restrictions

https://t.co/9RBUDEktXE

> What the UK government wants to do and what it in reality has the space to do tend to be two quite different things.
>
> Boris Johnson is running out of cake.
>
> — Alexander Clarkson (@APHClarkson) February 17, 2021

What if we shout loudly, slowly and (I'm sure this is important) in English? https://t.co/TLdSCWBV6N

> Perhaps finally a moment for some more UK commentators to pay a sliver of attention to what the EU did to Switzerland between 2014 and 2016?
>
> — Alexander Clarkson (@APHClarkson) February 17, 2021

Not feeling particularly reassured. "What the new Minister meant to say was that his first priority was the country and he thinks he may best of service continuing with EU relations..."

Nah. My ball, give it back... https://t.co/kMM1Rtt3Sr

> There seems to have been a real Whitehall bunfight over the last 24 hours.
>
> Some govt officials said Lord Frost was unhappy with Gove's interim role overseeing the implementation of the trade deal. \u201cHe feels the deal is his baby and wants to oversee it.\u201dhttps://t.co/kBbaBPjYcS
>
> — Sebastian Payne (@SebastianEPayne) February 17, 2021

The deals, both the Withdrawal Agreement and Trade and Cooperation Agreement, are poor from a UK point of view. So poor the PM can't honestly admit their content. Politically they look safe from Labour, but internal tensions grow (musicians, farmers etc). Watch that...