



T&I Communications Ltd

Political management consultancy with expertise in transport and infrastructure

Barnier once snapped that “Brexit is not a game”... The next round of the game will take place on Monday where the Cabinet will discuss the contents of the white paper, the Irish backstop and the UK’s no deal preparations.

Given the prime minister’s press conference this afternoon, it feels like the EU may have achieved one thing at the informal summit of the European Council: a bolstering of May’s resolve.

While her approach during the disastrous general election was “nothing has changed”, a more fleet-of-foot approach is anticipated, with May on the front foot throughout the party conference season, while, in private, pivoting slightly on the Irish issue.

The future economic partnership and the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland remain the sticking points.

Although the substance of the common rule book approach for goods and agri-goods has been welcomed by most parts of the EU27, it is clear that a little charm is lacking.

Less-than-positive stories about her uncompromising after dinner speech, the reaction to her robust article in *Die Welt* and the support of outliers like Hungary and Poland have not helped the British cause.

May has promised a new set of proposals for Northern Ireland, harnessing the EU-UK agreement on the use of technological - while pushing back on surrendering the province to the EU’s customs territory - and considering a possible compromise on regulatory checks.

In spite of Macron stating on the Marr on Sunday programme that the EU-UK agreement could be somewhere between EU Single Market membership and a standard free trade agreement i.e. Norway- or Canada+, the Chequers agreement has been dispatched for six.

As mentioned in T&I's previous EU-UK talks summary, May has limited-to-no wriggle room left.

It remains *highly* unlikely that the UK will remain in the EU Single Market or the Customs Union, it seems inconceivable that a blue or red British government would unleash another referendum, and certainly there's *no* widespread appetite for dissolving the current government and calling a general election.

With anti-EU parties on the march ahead of the European Parliament elections, the EU cannot be seen to allow concessions that undermine the EU Single Market.

The Conservative minority government needs to make progress ahead of creating some momentum for the 2022 general election.

Neither side can be seen to lose.

However, business, consumer and investor confidence - the vital ingredients of the British economy - will continue to take a battering until we get to a satisfactory conclusion.

All EU agreements are forged at the eleventh hour and *all* are fudges.

Key Brexit dates

- 18-19 October - European Council meeting on internal security, migration
- 13-14 November - European Council meeting (TBC)
- November - conclusion of withdrawal agreement and the head of terms of future security and trade relationship
- 14 December - European Council meeting on EU's next seven-year budget cycle
- 22 March 2019 - European Council
- 11:00:01 (GMT), 29 March 2019 - Brexit begins
- June 2019 - European Parliament election
- 31 December 2020 - transition / implementation / negotiation period ends.