

Someone, sometime soon, is going to have to admit that ...

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As the [Guardian noted yesterday](#):

Britain may not start negotiating its future trade relationship with the EU until the end of the year, ministers are admitting privately.

Originally it was hoped that phase two of the Brexit talks — covering a future trade deal, not just the withdrawal arrangements — would start after October, but ministers involved in the talks now think this timetable could slip.

This assumes such issues as the Irish border, existing rights to reside and the Brexit exit settlement can be agreed by then. Given current progress that seems very unlikely, unless David Davis is to resort to a 'whatever' negotiating mode and accept any EU proposal given his own reluctance to make any serious counter suggestion.

To put it another way, this negotiation is already running out of time.

And unless the transition is simply a 'put everything on hold for three years' deal the tangible, on the ground consequences of Brexit appear to be even harder to imagine happening in the required time period: the UK appears to have done literally nothing to anticipate the real needs from 1 April 2019 as yet, and this matters.

Take a simple example. Saying we will adopt EU air safety standards as they are on that day without having in place our own, fully functioning, authority to enforce them is meaningless. Passing a Bill is the easy bit: proving the job is being done is the hard bit, and unless that authority exists and is functioning on that day I can't see planes flying. Of course they were safe the day before, so they probably will be the day after. But safety depends on systems to evidence it. If we have none don't blame someone else if they refuse to play ball.

We are nowhere near these systems in so many areas it's just ludicrous to think we can exit the EU in April 2019.

But I think it may be worse than that. After forty years of being in the EU I think we may

find that the demand of creating independently what was previously possible only because it was shared may be insurmountable, as well as being beyond the capacity of our economy because the costs will be so great.

At sometime this realisation will dawn. Then, as I said in a tweet yesterday, someone in politics is going to have to realise that we just can't leave the EU: it's simply not technically and economically possible for the UK to replicate its systems, let alone in any way that gives us anything but a massive diseconomy of scale. And someone will then have to say this. The sooner that happens the better. But it needs to happen. Then, maybe, the real negotiations on how we get out of this mess begin.