

Brexit Bill Bombshell: EU officials insist Britain will have to pay TWICE when it quits

In a move bound to further antagonise the UK side in the talks senior EU diplomats revealed they will demand ongoing budget payments linked to a transitional deal separately to the divorce payout.

Such an arrangement would mean British taxpayers double-funding the bloc, as they would be covering its costs beyond Brexit through both the financial settlement and a separate contribution.

Brexiters today ripped into the EU for playing a “silly game” over its financial demands and said the UK had a right to point to the decades of huge net payments it has made to the project.

Brussels is already demanding a bumper Brexit bill payout from the Britain, expected to be up to £90 billion, which it says is required to cover budget commitments the UK has already signed up to.

These stretch to the end of the current multi-annual financial framework (MFF), a seven-year EU spending plan which runs to the end of 2020, and in many cases like foreign aid further into the future still.

However the EU’s position suggests that on top of this it will separately ask Britain to start stumping up Norway-style budget contributions, to cover Single Market access linked to a transitional deal, from March 2019.

That would mean UK taxpayers coughing up to cover the same commitments twice and flies in the fact of the British position, which is that transition budget payments should be used to cancel out the overall Brexit bill.

British negotiators have proposed payments of around £10 billion a year to Brussels – slightly higher than our current net contribution – for three years should offset any debts the EU feels the UK owes.

But a senior EU diplomat today shot down those hopes and said eurocrats see the

terms of the transition and the Brexit bill, which falls within the divorce, as an “independent discussion”.

She said: “This is an independent discussion because obviously, should there be transition, there is a contribution to make to that Single Market participation which is independent and on top of any debt from the past.”

The senior Commission official added that “in the first phase of our negotiation we - the EU - only talk about the past. We’re not talking about transition or any future relationship.”

Moments earlier Brexit secretary David Davis had called on his EU counterpart, Michel Barnier, to ditch his rigid phased approach to the talks and show more “flexibility and imagination”.

On the demands for a Brexit bill he defiantly insisted ministers had a “duty to interrogate it rigorously” adding that “the British taxpayers would expect nothing less”.

UKIP’s Brexit spokesman Gerard Batten said: “We won’t be paying twice over the odds when we shouldn’t be paying them anything at all.

“If they keep up this silly game, we will have every right to demand back our net contribution of £185 billion which we paid to the EU since we joined.”

Tory MP John Redwood said the UK owes Brussels “zero, nothing, zilch” after it leaves the bloc in 2019 and said that should be the “calculation” Mr Davis presents to EU negotiators.

He said: “The government has been very clear that it will pay what we owe. It seems equally clear we only owe the regular contributions up to the date of departure.

“The nine month delay in sending the Article 50 letter has already cost us around £9 billion of extra net contributions or £15 billion of gross contributions. Those who wish to delay our exit are wanting UK taxpayers to have to pay more to the EU.”

Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage pointed to a recent poll showing two-thirds of Britons would reject a £20 billion payout, adding: “There is very little public

appetite for handing Brussels a large Brexit Bill.”

Pieter Cleppe, the director of the Open Europe think-tank, said: “It’s politically unrealistic to expect Britain to agree a figure without getting something in return.

“It’s a bit bizarre for the EU to want to separate negotiations about money, especially if behind the scenes it is speculating that Britain may well want to move on this issue if it can secure success on the transition issue.”

A group of Brexit backing legal experts, called Lawyers for Britain, have previously assessed the EU’s claims for a divorce bill and found they have no basis in European law.

In a research paper published earlier this year the group wrote: “We have failed to find a credible legal argument either for a liability on the UK to contribute to the EU’s unfunded pension fund deficit, or for any liability to contribute to the EU’s ongoing programmes after Brexit day on 29 March 2019.”

Source:

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/848346/Brexit-news-EU-UK-Britain-separate-divorce-bill-budget-contributions>

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