

Macron: ‘I’m the hard boy of EU’ - French leader issues Boris with a fresh Brexit warning

EMMANUEL MACRON declared himself the “hard boy” of Brexit today but said he is ready to respect the decision made by British voters to quit the European Union.

The French President challenged Mr. Johnson to deliver a solution to break the Brexit deadlock, insisting it is the UK’s “destiny” to choose how the country leaves the European Union. He said he is ready to respect the “sovereign choice” of the British voters to quit the European Union. He went on to say that Prime Minister must present plans that protect the Good Friday Agreement and the “integrity of the single market” when attempting to replace the Northern Ireland backstop.

He also repeated Angela Merkel’s deadline that work on an alternative solution should be presented by Britain in the next 30 days.

Speaking alongside the Prime Minister, Mr. Macron said: “You know my position!

“My position has always been to respect the sovereign choice made by the British people to leave the European Union.

“I regret it. Had I been a British voter I would have made a different choice but I respect democracy and the wishes of the people and therefore believe we now have to implement this choice.



Emmanuel Macron declares himself the 'hard boy' of Brexit (Image: REUTERS)



Boris Johnson said "Let's get Brexit done, let's get it done sensibly and pragmatically" (Image: PA)

"My position is protecting and strengthening the European project - the single market, our ability to decide and build a more sovereign, stronger European

Union.

“This is the reason why I always work so we will never weaken our union in the negotiations by the position we have had to take.”

He added: “I’ve always been described as the hard boy of the group but it is just I’ve always been clear that a choice was made and we cannot just ignore it.

“We will have to implement the decision taken by the British people and I want to be efficient, so this is what I said last spring, I very much want all of us to find a solution but we will not find a new withdrawal agreement within 30 days which will be very different from the current one.”

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The French President challenged Mr. Johnson to deliver a solution to break the Brexit deadlock (Image: PA)

The French President went on to say that any arrangements drawn up to avoid customs checks on the border should respect the Northern Ireland peace process and the EU’s internal market.

“We have to find a solution and we have to guarantee to citizens, consumers in

Europe that we comply with rules of the European Union and goods on the market are controlled,” he said.

On the Good Friday Agreement, he added: “We have to respect what was negotiated in this respect, in the context of past negotiations, we should be able to do some work.”

Mr. Macron said that France was ready for a no-deal Brexit, and its businesses and citizens are prepared if Britain leaves without an agreement on October 31.

Responding, Mr. Johnson allayed fears that he is attempting to force through a no-deal.

The Prime Minister said: “I want to make absolutely clear to you, Emmanuel, the French people: I want a deal, I think we can get a deal, a good deal.



Brexit timeline (Image: EXPRESS)

“I know that with energy and creativity and application we can find a way forward

for all our businesses and citizens.

“It is vital for trust in politics that if you have a referendum then you should act on the instructions of the voters and that is why we must come out of EU on October 31, deal or no deal.”

He added: “Let’s get Brexit done, let’s get it done sensibly and pragmatically.

“Let’s not wait until October 31. Let’s get on now in depending and intensifying the friendship and partnership between us at lunch.”

Mr. Macron made clear that he favors the 30-day deadline set by Mrs. Merkel when she met the Prime Minister last night in Berlin.

The French President said: “We need visibility in 30 days, I just answer this for the reality of the backstop, I also believe this matches the goal of Chancellor Merkel.

“No one should wait until October 31 to find the right solution. If we fail to find the right solution, of course, we can’t do whatever it takes at the last minute, so we’ll make the most of this period of time and Michel Barnier will be part of that.”

He said the EU negotiator would only find solutions “without totally reshuffling the withdrawal agreement”, hinting that the backstop must remain.

“There’s been a lot of work and its been approved by the EU27,” he added.

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