



## DEBATE PACK

CDP 2017-0253 | 6 December 2017

E-petitions 200004, 1875070, 193282 and 200311 relating to a referendum on the deal for the UK's exit from the European Union

# Westminster Hall

## Monday 11 December 2017

### 4.30pm

## Debate initiated by the Petitions Committee

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# 1. Background

## Referendums in the UK

Although there has been a regulatory framework for referendums since 2000, each referendum held still requires primary legislation to allow for a national referendum to be held.

The general rules for the conduct of national referendums in the UK are set out in the *Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000*, often referred to as PPERA. It gives the Electoral Commission certain responsibilities in relation to referendums held under the terms of PPERA and makes general provisions to ensure the fair conduct of referendums.

More general information on referendums is available in Library briefing CBP 07692, [Referendums](#).

To hold a referendum on the Brexit deal agreed between the UK Government and the EU, Parliament would be required to pass primary legislation to provide for the detailed rules governing the conduct of that referendum.

An Act would need to apply the required elements of electoral law for the poll and count to occur. The legislation would also set the terms of the question and the franchise to be used.

The Act to allow for the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU was passed in 2015. The Parliament website has details of the [European Union Referendum Act 2015](#), including background papers and debates on the passage of the Bill.

## Timing of a referendum

The current timetable envisages a final Brexit deal in autumn 2018 with a Parliamentary vote on the deal in 'late 2018' (see Library briefing 7960, [Brexit timeline: events leading to the UK's exit from the European Union](#)). The European Parliament is also expected to vote on a deal in late 2018, with the UK expected to leave the EU at the end of March 2019.

If the British public were allowed a vote on the final deal this might be expected to happen in late 2018 or early 2019.

The Electoral Commission recommends that detailed rules for the conduct of a poll (either new or amending rules) should be in place at least 6 months before polling day.

Legislation would need to be introduced with enough time to go through its Parliamentary stages and for the Electoral Commission to assess the question to be asked (see below).

### **What question to ask?**

The question to ask is for the Government to decide when bringing forward the legislation allowing for the referendum. However, the Electoral Commission has a statutory role in assessing any question to be used in a national referendum. The Commission reports on the way the proposed referendum question is worded to make sure it is easy for voters to understand.

[E-petition 200004](#) wants the Government to hold a referendum with three options:

- To revoke the UK's Article 50 process and keep the UK in the EU;
- To reject the final deal and leave the EU without a deal;
- To accept the deal and leave the EU.

The House of Lords Constitution Committee examined referendums in the first session of the 2010-15 Parliament. Its report, [Referendums in the United Kingdom](#), noted that in the evidence it had received there was disagreement as to whether multi-option questions were appropriate.

Some argued that multi-part questions confuse voters. Others advocated a multi-part question where a two-option question would not accurately reflect a multi-part debate, thus making the outcome inaccurate.

Despite the disagreement on the issue of multipart questions, the Committee found that there was unanimous agreement that referendum questions should be worded in accordance with the broad principles outlined by the Electoral Commission:

We recommend that the presumption should be in favour of questions posing only two options for voters but recognise that there may be occasions when multi-option questions are preferable. We look to the Electoral Commission to assess the merits of multi-option questions in their referendum question assessment exercise. (See the paragraphs 148-159 of the Constitution Committee report).

### **Would a referendum be binding?**

The *European Union Referendum Act 2015* did not contain a provision to implement the result of the referendum. It meant that the result of the referendum was not legally binding on the Government. However, the Government made clear that it would respect the result of the poll.

The Cabinet Office published a document in February 2016, [The process for withdrawing from the European Union](#) which stated:

The result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union will be final. The Government would have a democratic duty to give effect to the electorate's decision. The

Prime Minister made clear to the House of Commons that “if the British people vote to leave, there is only one way to bring that about, namely to trigger Article 50 of the Treaties and begin the process of exit, and the British people would rightly expect that to start straight away”.

If a second referendum was to be binding it would require a provision within the Act allowing for the referendum. This was the case in the 2011 referendum on the proposal to change the way we elect Members of the House of Commons.

The *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*, which made provisions for holding a referendum on whether we should change from the First Past the Post system of elections to the House of Commons to the Alternative Vote (AV) system, explicitly made the result binding. Section 8 of the Act stated that in the event of a ‘yes’ vote to change the systems of election, then the provisions to allow for AV elections contained in the Act should be implemented. In the event of a ‘no’ vote then the provisions on AV were to be repealed.

### **Calls for a second referendum**

In the House of Commons, Geraint Davies MP’s Private Member’s Bill, [Terms of Withdrawal from EU \(Referendum\) Bill 2016-17](#), required “the holding of a referendum to endorse the United Kingdom and Gibraltar exit package proposed by HM Government for withdrawal from the EU, or to decide to remain a member, prior to the UK giving notice under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union; and for connected purposes”. The order for the bill’s second reading was scheduled for Friday 12 May 2017, but as Parliament was dissolved for the General Election, the Bill fell.

But since the triggering of Article 50 and the start of negotiations, calls for another referendum have linked the vote to a withdrawal agreement agreed between the EU and the UK, and a choice between the deal – or no deal - and the status quo.

### **Government and Parliament views**

The Prime Minister [made clear](#) in the Commons on 9 October that there would be no second referendum.

An [Economic Survey of the UK](#) published on 17 October by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated: “In case Brexit gets reversed by political decision (change of majority, new referendum, etc.), the positive impact on growth would be significant”. But the Treasury insisted there would be no second referendum.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn has said there is no need for a second referendum but for a good Brexit negotiation and a “meaningful vote in Parliament”. But recent reports suggest that he would not rule out a second referendum.

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<sup>1</sup> [Politics Home, 17 October 2017](#)

The Liberal Democrats and the Greens are in favour of a second EU referendum - offering a choice between the deal achieved in a withdrawal agreement and staying in the EU.

### **Public opinion**

Polls since the referendum last year have concluded both for and against another EU referendum. In a recent *Survation* report for the *Mail on Sunday*, 50% of voters wanted a second referendum on Brexit after reports emerged that the UK's exit bill could be up to £50 billion. 28% said they did not want to leave if remaining was still possible, while 33% said another vote was unnecessary and 16% were undecided.<sup>2</sup> For more poll results on this topic, see [WhatUKthinks polls](#).

The European Parliament has also received petitions from UK and other EU citizens calling for a second referendum, including [Petition No 0841/2016](#), [Petition No 0833/2016](#), [Petition No 0806/2016](#).

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<sup>2</sup> [Metro, 3 December 2017](#)

## 2. Petition and Government response

### 2.1 Petition

#### **Hold a referendum on the final Brexit deal**

We, the undersigned, call upon HM Government to give the people of this country the final say on the Brexit deal negotiated by the UK and EU. This would be done through a referendum that would take place prior to the April 2019 exit date.

The referendum would allow for three options:

- (1) To revoke Article 50, thereby keeping Britain in the EU
- (2) To reject the UK-EU deal and leave the EU
- (3) To accept the UK-EU deal and leave the EU

If no agreement has been negotiated by the UK and EU before the date of the referendum, then the third option could be removed. If all three options remain, it may be necessary for the vote to take place using a Single Transferable Vote to ensure no option is disadvantaged.

Regardless of whether individuals voted to remain or leave the EU in the June 2016 EU referendum, everyone should have a chance to decide their future based on the final agreement negotiated between the UK and EU.

### 2.2 Government's response

On 23 June 2016 the British people voted to leave the European Union. The UK Government is clear that it is now its duty to implement the will of the people and so there will be no second referendum.

The decision to hold the referendum was supported by a clear majority in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. On 23 June 2016 the British people voted to leave the European Union. The referendum was the largest democratic mandate in UK political history. In the 2017 General Election more than 85% of people voted for parties committed to respecting that result.

There must be no attempts to remain inside the European Union, no attempts to rejoin it through the back door, and no second referendum. The country voted to leave the European Union, and it is the duty of the Government to make sure we do just that. Rather than second guess the British people's decision to leave the European Union, the challenge now is to make a success of it - not just for those who voted leave but for every citizen of the United Kingdom, bringing together everyone in a balanced approach which respects the decision to leave the political

structure of the EU but builds a strong relationship between Britain and the EU as neighbours, allies and partners.

Parliament passed an Act of Parliament with a clear majority giving the Prime Minister the power to trigger Article 50, which she did on 29 March in a letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. As a matter of firm policy, our notification will not be withdrawn - for the simple reason that people voted to leave, and the Government is determined to see through that instruction.

Both Houses of Parliament will have the opportunity to vote on the final agreement reached with the EU before it is concluded. This will be a meaningful vote which will give MPs the choice to either accept the final agreement or leave the EU with no agreement.

The people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe. We want a deep and special partnership with the EU. We aim to get the right deal abroad and the right deal for people here at home. We will deliver a country that is stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking than ever before.

*Department for Exiting the European Union*

### 3. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

**Nick Clegg is right: we need a second Brexit referendum**

The Spectator  
Ross Clark  
5 December 2017

**Second Brexit referendum has 16-point lead as half of Britons back new vote, opinion poll shows**

Independent  
Chantal Da Silva  
3 December 2017

**Diane Abbott says she would back referendum on final Brexit deal**

The Guardian  
Jessica Elgot  
28 November 2017

**Parliament to get binding vote on final Brexit deal**

BBC News  
13 November 2017

**Is a second Brexit vote possible? Yes – if the people want it**

The Guardian  
Hugo Dixon  
30 October 2017

**Labour's best option is a fresh referendum on the Brexit deal**

New Statesman  
Michael Chessum  
20 October 2017

**A Referendum on the Final EU Deal Is a Natural Conclusion to the Brexit Process**

Huffington Post  
Tom Holder  
18 September 2017

**Second EU referendum must be held on final Brexit deal, says former head of British civil service**

The Independent  
Jon Stone  
21 February 2017

**What would voters be asked in a second EU referendum – and would they get it?**

Democratic Audit UK  
Alan Renwick  
9 February 2017

**A second Brexit vote is a real possibility now – here's why it should happen**

The Conversation  
Stijn Smismans  
17 November 2016

**DEUTSCHE BANK: There will be a 2nd referendum — just not the one you expect**

Business Insider  
Oscar Williams-Grut  
6 July 2016

## 4. Parliamentary material

### 4.1 PQs

#### **Topical Questions**

**01 Dec 2016 | 617 c1664**

**Asked by: David Nuttall**

Does my right hon. Friend reject the advice of those calling for a second referendum and agree with me that seeking to reverse the decision that the people of the country made on 23 June serves only to undermine public trust in the House and in our democracy?

**Answered by: David Jones | Department for Exiting the European Union**

My hon. Friend is entirely right: there will be no second referendum.

#### **UK Membership of EU: Referendums**

**02 Aug 2016 | 41955**

**Asked by: Tom Brake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of holding a second referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

**Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The Prime Minister has been clear that Brexit means Brexit. We must now prepare for the process to leave the EU and the Government is committed to ensuring the best possible outcome for the British people in the negotiations.

### 4.2 Debates

#### **Terms of Withdrawal from the European Union (Referendum)**

**22 Mar 2017 | 623 cc878-880**

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for the holding of a referendum in the United Kingdom and Gibraltar on the proposed terms for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union; and for connected purposes.

Question put and agreed to.

**European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill [Extracts]**  
**7 Mar 2017 | 779 cc1203-1240**

[...]

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** My Lords, the Conservative Party manifesto made it absolutely clear that we would respect the outcome, a position that the noble Lord himself took on the night of the referendum. It is absolutely our intention that the Government will deliver on the results of the referendum. I know that the noble Lord is spending Lent eating his own words, but I am sorry to say that he is wrong on this point.

Then there are the consequences of such a referendum. Would it bring certainty? Will businesses clap their hands with glee at the thought of a referendum some years off, the basis on which it would be held unclear, but the consequences of which could be to throw the entire negotiated settlement up in the air? We know the answer. As I have said, the Institute of Directors have called for:

“A commitment across all major political parties ... not to undertake a second referendum on either EU membership or the Brexit deal to reduce uncertainty”.

What would happen, even after all this, if the result of the second referendum is still to leave? As some noble Lords have pointed out, would we once again be subjected to people saying, “Actually, we don’t like this answer. Please try again”? Where does it end? Will we continue to hold the same referendum until we get the result that those who support this amendment prefer?

**Lord Liddle (Lab):** If, as the Prime Minister said in her Lancaster House speech, no deal would be better than a bad deal, is the Minister really telling us that in the circumstances of no deal he would absolutely rule out a referendum in the future?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** Yes, my Lords. It is very clear: we are leaving the European Union. That is the pure and simple answer to the noble Lord.

[...]

**European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill [Extracts]**  
**21 February 2017 | 779 cc203-324**

[...]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (Lord Bridges of Headley) (Con):** Let me now turn to the issue of a second referendum. The noble Lord, Lord Butler, asked if the views of the people on the final deal are irrelevant. The Government clearly do not think the views of the public are irrelevant, as we are honouring the views they expressed in the referendum. We are engaging with the public, and will continue to do so as the negotiations are scrutinised and the agreement is voted on

in Parliament. As my noble friend Lord Hague said, we cannot go round in circles. We need certainty and clarity—certainty and clarity that would be dashed by a second referendum. As the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, argued, we could descend into a world of “neverendums”.

As to the point of the noble Lord, Lord Newby, that such a referendum would bring the country together, let me ask this: given that the Liberal Democrats argue the first referendum has created so much division, why would a second one bring the country together? To insert a second referendum now would backslide on this Parliament’s and this Government’s commitment to honour the result. As a number of noble Lords have said, it would undermine our negotiating position and, as the noble Lord, Lord Hennessy, put it, that way lies peril.

[...]

**European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill [Extracts]**  
**01 Feb 2017 | 620 cc1030-1145**

[...]

**Helen Whately:** To those who want a second referendum to choose between a final deal and staying in, I ask: could there be any stronger incentive for the European Union to offer us unattractive exit terms? Proposing a second referendum may be in their political interest, but it is clearly not in the UK’s interest. [...]

[...]

**European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill [Extracts]**  
**31 Jan 2017 | 620 cc817-995**

[...]

**Ms Eagle:** I fully endorse the amendments tabled in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition—they would make the best of this difficult situation—but I know that Opposition amendments, no matter how sensible, rarely get accepted by the Government, especially this Government, who seem obsessed with bringing about the most extreme Brexit possible. Labour will fight to get the best possible Brexit deal.

[...]

**Caroline Lucas:** Leaders of the leave campaign famously talk about taking back control. If that means anything, it surely means that control must be not just about our departure, but about our destination. Democracy requires that Parliament has ample opportunity to scrutinise the terms of the Brexit deal that will emerge from negotiations, but it also requires the country to have the right to continue to be given a say in the form of a referendum on the proposed deal. I cannot vote for a Bill that fails to provide those safeguards.

**EU Referendum Rules [Extract]**  
**05 Sep 2016 | 614 cc1-50WH**

[...]

**Helen Hayes:** Yesterday, the Prime Minister confirmed that there is no commitment to give additional funds to the NHS as a consequence of Brexit—a pledge that toured the country on the side of a bus, and on the basis of which millions of people voted in good faith to leave the EU. The Prime Minister says that Brexit means Brexit, but when such pledges are broken almost immediately, none of us really knows what Brexit will mean. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that lack of clarity further underlines the case for enabling the British people to see the detail of the actual Brexit deal and vote again on whether they would like to proceed on those specific terms, and that that should take place before article 50 is triggered?

**Kerry McCarthy:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the referendum campaign was flawed in terms of the information that people had access to, but I also agree with the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) that we should not look to rerun the referendum we have just had. Instead, we should look forward to having a referendum on the Brexit deal, because the big question facing us now is what Brexit means. I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman's stance on that is: is he talking about a rerun of the vote that we had on 23 June, or about a Brexit vote?

[...]

**Caroline Lucas:** I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr Umunna) because he made some very powerful points. The petition that we are discussing has more than 4 million signatures. To me at least, it is an understandable expression of pain and anger in response to a bitterly fought EU referendum campaign that has left this country, as the hon. Gentleman said, deeply divided.

[...]

Brexit means Brexit, so we are told. I believe that we need a second referendum on the terms of any Brexit deal because we have absolutely no idea what is on the other side of the door marked Brexit. We might have chosen to open that door, but even now, two months after the vote, we have no idea—not even the dimmest shape—of what on earth is on the other side.

[...]

Before a referendum on the terms of Brexit takes place, lessons must be learned and the Government need to take a long hard look at the Electoral Reform Society report called “Doing referendums differently”. Let me give just a few quotes from it. It says:

“There were glaring democratic deficiencies in the run-up to the vote, with previously unreleased polling showing that far too many people felt they were ill-informed about the issues...the top-down,

personality-based nature of the debate failed to address major policies and subjects, leaving the public in the dark...misleading claims could be made with impunity.”

The Electoral Reform Society calls for

“a root and branch review of referendums, learning the lessons of the EU campaign to make sure the mistakes that were made in terms of regulation, tone and conduct are never repeated.”

I echo that call, because it is clear that there was so much misinformation; yes, it was on all sides, but I believe that on the leave side it was particularly egregious. We were told that we could end freedom of movement and keep full access to the single market. We were told that we could continue to benefit from being part of the single market, yet somehow take back control, make all our rules here in the UK and cease having to follow EU rules. Then there was the famous £350 million a week for the NHS; the truth is that we will not have any extra money, let alone an amount anywhere near the lie of all lies that disgraced the side of a perfectly innocent bus for months on end.

[...]

We need people to be given a say and to have real control over the terms of any Brexit deal. We need maximum public engagement and parliamentary scrutiny. That means that the Government must set out their plan for what they want Brexit to look like. They need to present that to the people in an early general election to secure a mandate that currently they do not have, then they need to ensure full and proper parliamentary debate and scrutiny, and only then allow MPs to vote on whether to invoke article 50 and set in train the formal process of leaving, so that we know what direction that train is going in. In addition, we should argue for wider public engagement, giving opportunities for meaningful input throughout the process, as well as maximising input from civil society organisations, NGOs, charities, businesses, local authorities and other stakeholders. To claim that we want to take back control of the UK’s future, but refuse measures to maximise parliamentary and public scrutiny, is unforgiveable, contradictory and harmful.

### **Brexit: Case for a Second Referendum [Extract]**

**7 Jul 2016 | 773 cc2155-2172**

**Baroness King of Bow:** To ask Her Majesty’s Government whether they have made an assessment of the case for holding a second referendum on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union.

[...]

Let us turn to the British people. They voted by a narrow margin to leave the EU, but many British people—possibly the majority; possibly even the majority in this House—were unaware of the far-reaching consequences of the EU referendum. After all, they were

asked, “Do you want to leave the EU?”, not, “Do you want to break up the UK?”. This likely outcome was not articulated clearly by either side during the referendum campaign. This brings us back to the central problem. After the dust has settled, in the immediate aftermath of the referendum vote, we do not know what we voted for. We have no idea.

Did we vote to leave the EU but stay in the single market? A lot of people who campaigned and voted for Brexit, including Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, say that was what they were fighting for. Really? Well, we are not going to get that unless we accept free movement of people. That has been made very plain by EU leaders. Although the remain camp accepts free movement of people, many in the leave camp do not; in fact, that was why many of them voted to leave. In many of those forgotten British towns that have been left to struggle on their own—like Don Valley in the north, Ebbsfleet and Thurrock in the south and Ebbw Vale and Gwent in Wales—a lot of people who voted to leave said that they did so because they wanted to restrict free movement of people. They voted for something that will probably never happen, so they have already been deceived. At least let them have the final say when they know what the cost is.

[...]

That is why I brought this debate: to ask if the Government had made an assessment of the case for a second referendum. I know that the Minister will stand up and say, “Yes, we have made an assessment and no, there will be no second referendum”. I simply say that politicians often eat their words: look at David Cameron and Article 50, Nigel Farage saying that migration would be brought down, and Boris Johnson claiming that £350 million more a week would be available for the NHS. Then let us look at ourselves and think about what we say today. I say this: in the interests of democracy, the British people must be given the chance to vote on the deal to leave the EU once we finally know what the deal is and what it costs in terms of our economy, our jobs, our pensions, our future, our global influence, our geographical borders and—last but certainly not least—our precious identity as a tolerant, open, outward-facing nation. I say let the people decide.

### **Outcome of the European Union Referendum [Extract]** **06 Jul 2016 | 773 cc2036-8**

[...]

**Lord Hain:** My Lords, I wish to explore the question raised in this House by the noble Lord, Lord Butler of Brockwell, on the case for a referendum on the precise terms of Brexit. The referendum on 23 June was unusual, even unique, for 1 million reasons. It was clear what leave supporters were voting against, but nobody knew what sort of alternative future they were voting for. None of their leaders explained this. Boris Johnson, for example, began by insisting that remaining in the single market was essential, then moved to supporting a Canadian-type trade deal. When the deficiencies of that option were exposed, he stayed silent until the Monday after the

referendum when he published an article readvocating UK participation in the single market, only for an aide the next day hastily to withdraw that explaining he was too “tired” when he wrote it. So confused were leave leaders that Michael Gove actually suggested we model ourselves on Albania. Is that really the best this great intellectual of the leave campaign could do?

If we end up maintaining a trading relationship within the single market, voters are entitled to know the consequences, such as any, or no, limits on freedom of movement. They should also know the cost consequences. For example, on the Norway model, the net cost to the UK of full access to the single market was estimated by the Library last year at £7.5 billion per annum, compared with a net cost of £10 billion per annum for full UK membership of the European Union. Yes, it is less, but it is still considerable and leaves very little surplus for filling the multibillion pound gaps in subsidies to farmers and areas such as Wales and Cornwall in receipt of European funds which Brexit campaigners airily promised to maintain.

Immediately after the vote, Brexit leaders also began shamelessly reneging on what direct experience from weeks on doorsteps told me was the overwhelming reason for people voting to leave; namely, to reduce immigration—not just to “control”, but to “reduce”. That was a betrayal if there ever was one, as was the brazen denial by the leave leaders after the vote that the “£350 million for the NHS” poster on their very own Brexit campaign bus actually meant that. I know for a fact that people on doorsteps believed that. People are entitled to know and to have their say on all this when the outcome of the negotiations is clear.

Let us consider other referenda sanctioned by Parliament. In 1997 in Wales and Scotland, referenda on a Welsh Assembly and a Scottish Parliament respectively were crystal clear. From the White Papers published beforehand, people knew exactly what they were voting for. The same was true of a referendum on a north-east England regional government in 2004, and in the more recent alternative vote referendum of 2011. But, last month, nobody on the leave side had a clue what they were voting for. That is why there is a strong case for having a second referendum, not to rerun the first one—for the result of that was clear, even if narrowly so—but for the British people explicitly to decide whether they approve of the terms of exit. This is emphatically not some ruse to overturn the result on 23 June, but instead to seek the verdict of the people on the future of the UK, on our trading relationship, if any, with the European Union, and on the implications for our prosperity and migration. This is fundamental to democratic principles.

Perhaps a straw in the wind, or perhaps not, came yesterday with an ITV Wales Welsh Political Barometer poll conducted by Cardiff University. It showed an almost exact reversal from a 53% to 47% leave vote in Wales to a 53% to 47% remain vote. Professor Roger Scully commented: “When we look at the details of the results ... There appears to be a small cohort of voters who voted to Leave, but who may now be experiencing what some in the media have termed ‘Bregret’”.

If, as we might all agree, the Brexit vote was a salutary one of no confidence in the whole political class, will that not be made even worse, perhaps creating a dangerous mood of betrayal, without a referendum for voters to decide whether they support the final Brexit deal?

I turn to some troubling questions over Northern Ireland. John Major and Tony Blair in their joint appearance in Belfast last month were trenchant about the dangers to Irish stability and the peace process if we left the EU, and as architects of the peace process, they should know. The settlement I helped negotiate in 2007 reinforced the Good Friday cross-border institutions which are important to both republicans and nationalists in supporting that process. What exactly will now happen to these, especially since Brexit means that the two parts of the island of Ireland will be on opposite sides of an EU border for the very first time in history? Remember that the UK and the Republic joined together in 1973.

Leave advocates ask why the common travel area, which has existed since the early 1920s, would be threatened when it even survived the Troubles. However, there were tough security checks and border controls between north and south during the Troubles, which under the peace process have been dismantled. The border today is invisible, with substantial cross movement and increasing business, cultural and economic links, which are all to the good. This is especially important to republicans and nationalists, and vital for businesses of all colours.

If we left the EU, that same 310-mile border would be the only land border between the UK and the EU. Surely it is unthinkable in today's world of jihadi terrorism, mass migration and desperate refugees that it would not have to be made secure. Indeed, after the leave campaign's pledges for even more stringent border controls, how could they with any credibility allow the current open crossing to survive as a back door into the UK? Surely it is hard to envisage how the common travel area between the Republic and the UK could remain?

I have one other point. EU funding and investment have underpinned the peace process. Over £2 billion will have gone to Northern Ireland in the six years to 2020. Are the Government guaranteeing to replace it? Perhaps the uncertainty over Northern Ireland could also be a case for a referendum on the negotiated final deal of the UK's exit from the European Union.

[...]

## 5. Further reading

### **Brexit timeline: events leading to the UK's exit from the European Union**

#### **18 Oct 2017 | Commons Briefing papers | CBP-7960**

In a referendum held on 23 June 2016, the majority of the UK electorate voted to leave the European Union.

On 29 March 2017, in writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, the Prime Minister formally triggered Article 50 and began the two-year countdown to the UK formally leaving the EU (commonly known as “Brexit”).

This paper provides a timeline of the major events leading up to the referendum and subsequent dates of note, looking ahead to expected events as the UK and EU negotiate Britain's exit.

### **European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill**

#### **30 Jan 2017 | Commons Briefing papers | CBP-7884**

The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill was published on 26 January 2017 and will be debated in the House of Commons from 31 January to 8 February 2017. This House of Commons Library briefing paper analyses the Bill and its context; the current version includes new information on Euratom and on the proposed amendments.

The Government has drafted the Bill very tightly, which makes it hard for changes to be made that might, for instance, delay or subvert the Government's plans for Brexit.

But there has nevertheless been much discussion about possible amendments. Several have already been tabled, for instance to require the Government to provide information to Parliament on the negotiations, and to require Parliament's approval before the Government concludes a withdrawal agreement. Some Members are seeking to prevent the Bill from even passing its second reading, on various grounds.

### **Referendums**

#### **31 Aug 2016 | Commons Briefing papers | CBP-7692**

This Briefing Paper provides background to the increasing use of referendums worldwide to settle constitutional issues and to the holding of referendums in the UK; a table of all referendums held in the UK to date is provided. The use of thresholds in referendums is discussed and information provided on the administration of referendums and regulation of the referendum campaigns.

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