



DEBATE PACK

Number 0061, 7 March 2019

E-petition 239706 relating to leaving the European Union

Westminster Hall

Monday 11 March 2019 at 4.30pm

Daniel Zeichner MP will open the debate

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1. Background

1.1 Summary

With the UK due to leave the EU on 29 March 2019, the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) agreed by the UK Government and EU in November 2018 has yet to be approved by the House of Commons. Since the House of Commons rejected the WA on 15 January 2019, there have been a series of Government statements and votes in the House of Commons on the Government's Brexit strategy.

The Government has engaged in further negotiations with the EU on the WA, in order to obtain changes to the most contentious element of the WA, the Northern Ireland/Ireland backstop, that would be acceptable to a majority in the House of Commons. EU leaders have however stated repeatedly that they are unwilling to re-open renegotiations on the WA, but would consider making changes to the Political Declaration on the future UK-EU relationship. Talks are ongoing with the EU to discuss possible new text that could provide reassurances over the backstop alongside the WA.

On 26 February the Prime Minister committed to holding a vote in the House of Commons on 13 March on leaving the EU without a deal and, if this proposition is rejected, a further vote on 14 March on seeking an extension to the Article 50 period in order to delay the UK's departure from the EU. This would occur if a second "meaningful vote" on the WA, scheduled for 12 March, results in another defeat for the Government.

The EU Court of Justice has ruled that the UK could choose to revoke its Article 50 notice unilaterally. The Government firmly rejects doing this. The most likely route leading to an Article 50 revocation would be if another referendum on Brexit was held, with an option to remain in the EU. Another referendum is proposed by the People's Vote campaign, supported by a cross-party group including a small number of Conservative MPs.

The Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn has indicated that the Labour party will support another referendum while continuing to press for Labour's alternative Brexit proposal, involving a UK customs union with the EU. However, several Labour MPs continue to oppose holding another referendum.

1.2 The Withdrawal Agreement and EU assurances on the backstop and future negotiations

The Government's resolution seeking approval for the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) and the Political Declaration (PD) on future UK-EU relations agreed by the European Council in November 2018 was defeated in the House of Commons on 15 January 2019 by 432 votes to 202.¹

The Prime Minister has subsequently set out her intention to seek further negotiations with the EU on the WA, in order to obtain changes to the most contentious element of the WA, the Northern Ireland/Ireland backstop, that would be acceptable to a majority in the House of Commons.² EU leaders have however stated repeatedly that they are unwilling to re-open renegotiations on the WA, but would consider making changes to the PD that would provide a more specific outline of the future UK-EU relationship³.

The EU has also sought to provide reassurances to the UK regarding the intended temporary nature of the backstop should it need to come into force in order to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland, and over its commitment to negotiate a future relations agreement with the UK that would replace the backstop.⁴

1.3 Government statements on Brexit and Commons votes in January and February

Since the Government's defeat in the 15 January "meaningful vote", the Prime Minister has made further statements on Brexit to the House of Commons with debates and votes held on the Government motion on 29 January, 14 February and 27 February.

On 29 January, [amendments](#) seeking to set aside specific days in the House of Commons to debate different options on Brexit and the future relationship with the EU⁵, and to guarantee parliamentary time for [Yvette Cooper's Private Member's Bill](#) providing for a Commons' vote on Article 50 extension were defeated.

¹ The "meaningful vote", as required under [Section 13](#) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018,

² For further details on what the backstop entails see House of Commons Library Insight, [The backstop explained](#), 12 December 2018. See also House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8453, [The UK's EU Withdrawal Agreement](#), 1 December 2018.

³ See for example the [speech to the European Parliament](#) by the EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier on 16 January 2019. Opening statements available at https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/opening-statements_1166570_03-V_rv.

⁴ For example in December 2018 European Council [conclusions](#) and the exchange of [letters](#) with the Prime Minister on 14 January 2019. See also the House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8474, [EU assurances to the UK on Brexit](#), 15 January 2019.

⁵ For an outline of different options for the future relationship being proposed, see House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8483, [Brexit: Proposals for the future UK-EU relationship](#), 25 January 2019.

The House of Commons did vote in favour of the amendment by Graham Brady MP, also supported by the Government, which indicated that the support of the House for the WA would be contingent upon “replacing” the backstop with “alternative arrangements.”

An amendment tabled by Caroline Spelman MP, rejecting the possibility of the UK leaving the EU without a ratified withdrawal agreement and agreed framework for the future relationship, was also approved. However, this amendment has no direct legal effect⁶.

On 14 February, the Government motion reiterating support for the approach to leaving the EU expressed by the House on 29 January 2019, was [defeated by 303 votes to 258](#).

1.4 Labour party proposals and Government response

Following the vote on 15 January, the Prime Minister [invited](#) colleagues from across Parliament to talks to find a deal that could gain the support of Parliament.⁷ After initially refused to engage in talks, the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn agreed to do so following the vote on 29 January.

In a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister on 6 February, Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn said that the Government would need to enshrine five changes to the Political Declaration in law to secure Labour support for a Withdrawal Agreement. These would include a permanent and comprehensive UK-wide customs union; close alignment with the EU Single Market, underpinned by shared institutions and obligations; and dynamic alignment on rights and protections.

However, the Prime Minister’s [response](#) to Mr Corbyn on 10 February stressed the importance of the UK having an independent trade policy (thus ruling out a customs union) and rejected the idea of automatically following changes of EU rules on workers’ rights or environmental protection. She said the Government would however be “prepared to commit to asking Parliament whether it wishes to follow suit whenever the EU changes its standards in these areas”.

1.5 Discussions on alternative arrangements to backstop

Following the adoption of the Brady amendment, the Prime Minister said that this mandate would be taken forward to “seek to obtain legally binding changes to the withdrawal agreement that deal with concerns on the backstop while guaranteeing no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland”.

EU leaders have however continued to reiterate that the WA is [not open for renegotiation](#) and stressed that the [backstop is integral to the WA](#).

⁶ See House of Commons Library Insight, [A ‘Plan B’ considered and two instructions given: Where next for Parliament and Brexit?](#), 30 January 2019

⁷ See BBC cross-party talks timeline, [Brexit: Which MPs have had talks in Westminster?](#) 17 January 2019.

In a joint [press conference](#) with the Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar on 6 February, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said that “so-called alternative arrangements can never replace the backstop”.⁸

The Prime Minister held further talks with Commission President Juncker and European Council President Tusk on 7 February. The Times [reported](#) that Mrs May had suggested three options for changing the backstop: a time limit on its operation (her preferred choice); alternative arrangements, including the use of technology to avoid a hard border in Ireland; and a unilateral exit clause.

Following their meeting, Mrs May and Mr Juncker issued a [joint statement](#) which said that the Prime Minister had raised various options for dealing with the House of Commons’ concerns around the backstop but that President Juncker had underlined that the EU27 will not reopen the withdrawal agreement. President Juncker had however “expressed his openness to add wording to the political declaration . . . in order to be more ambitious in terms of content and speed when it comes to the future relationship between the European Union and the UK”.

There was agreement that the UK and EU negotiating teams should hold talks “as to whether a way through can be found that would gain the broadest possible support in the UK parliament and respect the guidelines agreed by the European council”.

1.6 Government motions and debate, 27 February

In her [statement](#) on 26 February, the Prime Minister referred to ongoing talks with the EU, involving herself, the Brexit Secretary and the Attorney General. This included a meeting between the Prime Minister and President Juncker the previous week, in which “additions or changes” that could be made to the Political Declaration in order “to increase confidence in the focus and ambition of both sides in delivering the future partnership we envisage as soon as possible” were discussed. These would be followed up by the Brexit Secretary with the EU’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier.

Mrs May said that the UK and EU had agreed to consider a joint workstream to develop alternative arrangements to ensure the absence of a hard border in Northern Ireland. This work would be done in parallel with the future relationship negotiations. The aim of this work would be “to ensure that, even if the full future relationship is not in place by the end of the implementation period, the backstop is not needed because we have a set of alternative arrangements ready to go”. President Juncker had agreed that the EU would give priority to this work.

⁸ The Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee concluded its report, [The land border between Northern Ireland and Ireland](#), in March 2018 that there were no visible “technical solutions, anywhere in the world, beyond the aspirational, that would remove the need for physical infrastructure at the border”.

1.7 Government commits to vote on extending Article 50⁹

The Prime Minister has spoken [against](#) the possibility of extending Article 50 and has [repeatedly](#) stated that the UK will leave the EU on 29 March 2019.

Yvette Cooper presented a [revised version](#) of her Bill on 12 February 2019 with cross-party support. She [said](#) that if the Prime Minister had not secured Commons support for an agreement by 26 February, then a cross-party amendment would be tabled that week in order to make time for the Bill. The Bill had a new trigger date of 13 March, by which time if a withdrawal agreement has not been approved the Commons will vote either to agree a no-deal Brexit or to require the Prime Minister to seek an extension of Article 50.¹⁰ The Labour frontbench had also indicated support for the amendment.

In her [statement](#) on 26 February 2019, the Prime Minister committed the Government to holding a vote in the House of Commons on 14 March on extending Article 50, if the Government had not won a meaningful vote in the Commons by 12 March and if the House (on 13 March) subsequently votes against leaving the EU without an agreement. This came after three Cabinet Ministers had authored a joint article in the *Daily Mail* suggesting that Article 50 be extended in order to avoid the UK leaving the EU without a deal should there be no breakthrough in terms of the Commons' supporting the WA, and reports that several Government Ministers and Conservative MPs were prepared to vote for the Cooper amendment.¹¹

If the Commons rejects the WA and PD again, and then votes against the no deal proposition on 13 March, Mrs May said that the Government will then table a motion to be voted upon on 14 March on whether Parliament wants to seek "a short, limited extension to article 50".

Mrs May also reiterated that she did not wish the Government to arrive at the point where it would be necessary to request an Article 50 extension:

But let me be clear—I do not want to see article 50 extended. Our absolute focus should be on working to get a deal and leaving on 29 March. An extension beyond the end of June would mean the UK taking part in the European Parliament elections. What kind of message would that send to the more than 17 million people who voted to leave the EU nearly three years ago now? And the House should be clear that a short extension—not beyond the end of

⁹ For further discussion on scenarios in which Article 50 could be extended and the procedure for doing so, see House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8496 [Extending Article 50: could Brexit be delayed?](#), 12 February 2019

¹⁰ See House of Commons Library Insight, [Yvette Cooper's Private Member's Bill explained](#), 19 February 2019.

¹¹ For the joint article by David Gauke, Amber Rudd and Greg Clark see [Cabinet 'No Deal' revolt: PM facing prospect of a mass walkout after three senior ministers signal they are ready to help force a delay to Brexit](#), *Daily Mail*, 22 February 2019. The *Daily Mail* also reported that several Government ministers were prepared to resign and support the Cooper amendment on 27 February.

June—would almost certainly have to be a one-off. If we had not taken part in the European Parliament elections, it would be extremely difficult to extend again, so it would create a much sharper cliff edge in a few months' time. An extension cannot take no deal off the table. The only way to do that is to revoke article 50, which I shall not do, or to agree a deal.

1.8 Update on negotiations, 6 March 2019

Following meetings in Brussels Attorney-General Geoffrey Cox, [told reporters](#) on 6 March that talks would be continuing. He said:

There are very sensitive discussions. We are into the meat of the matter now. We have put forward some proposals, very reasonable proposals. We are now into the detail of the discussion.

Mr Cox [said](#) that talks with the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier had involved an exchange of "robust, strong views", and a Government spokesman said that that talks had been "difficult".

A European Commission spokesperson [said that](#) Mr Barnier had informed Commissioners that while the talks were taking place in a constructive atmosphere "discussions have been difficult" and that no solution had been identified at this point which was consistent with the WA "including the protocol on Northern Ireland which won't be reopened".

The Commission spokesperson added that Mr Barnier had "offered ideas on how to give further assurances" that the backstop would only apply for as long as necessary, unless and until it can be replaced by a future trading relationship. Further technical talks would carry on all week.

In a note on the meeting, the EU's deputy chief Brexit negotiator, Sabine Weyand had [reportedly](#) said that the Attorney General's requests "are going well beyond where Barnier can go." Negotiations were focussing on attempts to turn the EU's earlier reassurances on the temporary nature of the backstop and its commitment to have a new agreement with the UK in place which would supersede the arrangement into a legal binding text.

The UK's request for an independent arbitration mechanism outside the jurisdiction of the EU Court of Justice on the question of whether the EU was acting in good faith in meeting these commitments was described as the "thorniest issue".

The Prime Minister's spokesman said that Government was [still determined](#) to secure legally binding changes to the backstop, and that it was still intended that the second "meaningful vote" would take place on 12 March¹².

¹² See Daniel Boffey and Heather Stewart, [Brexit meaningful vote will go ahead, says No 10, despite talks stalling](#), *The Guardian*, 6 March 2019 and Tony Connelly, [EU-UK end Brexit meeting with no sign of breakthrough](#), *RTE*, 5 March 2019

1.9 No Deal

The Government's commitments on holding votes on no deal and extending Article 50 should the WA not be approved on 12 March lessens the possibility of the UK leaving the EU without a deal on 29 March. However, if no deal is rejected and an extension to Article 50 is agreed first by the House of Commons and then by the EU27, this could still lead to the UK leaving the EU without a deal if no agreement is approved by the House of Commons in the extended period (unless Article 50 is revoked, see below).

The Government released an [impact assessment](#) of implications for business and trade of a no deal exit on 26 February 2019. It referred to its previously released analysis that estimated that the UK economy would be 6.3% to 9% smaller in fifteen years' time than it otherwise would be compared to present arrangements. It also gave details of significant negative impacts on trade and business, with the availability of goods impacted by customs administration and delays at the border. Both tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade would be raised. Customs declarations alone would add an estimated £13 billion a year in costs on businesses. Industries with supply chains integrated within the EU would face additional costs and burdens. The cumulative impact of a "no deal" scenario in Northern Ireland would be more severe than in Great Britain.

1.10 Government view on revoking Article 50

The Prime Minister has been clear that she intends to deliver on the 2016 referendum result and to ensure that the UK leaves the EU on 29 March 2019.

Although Article 50 of the TEU did not specify a procedure for a Member State which had changed its mind on leaving the EU and wanted to revoke Article 50, the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) on 10 December 2018 ruled that a Member State can revoke the Article 50 notification "unilaterally" provided the revocation takes place before a withdrawal agreement enters into force and the two-year period from the date of the notification of the intention to withdraw from the EU, and possibly any extension, has not expired. The decision to revoke "must be decided following a democratic process in accordance with national constitutional requirements".

The ruling also refers to an "unequivocal and unconditional" decision made by the Member State. This means that the goal of revocation must be to actually stay in the EU, not to alter the shape of negotiations. Hence, Article 50 cannot be revoked simply to buy time or to continue negotiations on a new membership arrangement, with the possibility of issuing another notification to leave in the near future if the Member State doesn't get what it wants. It would also not be possible to revoke Article 50 in order to call another referendum if there was a possibility that this could lead to the UK then issuing another

Article 50 notification should the referendum result in a decision to restart the withdrawal process.¹³

In response to the judgement, the Brexit Secretary Steve Barclay gave a [statement](#) to the House of Commons on 10 December 2018. He said the Government noted the judgement but that this did not change the Government approach in that it has no intention of revoking Article 50 and that it intends to honour the 2016 referendum result.

1.11 Holding another referendum

The most likely scenario leading to Article 50 being revoked would be if there was another referendum resulting in a vote to remain in the EU (presuming that this option was on the ballot paper). Holding another referendum, including an option to remain in the EU, is favoured by the Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party and the cross-party [People's Vote](#) campaign, also including some Labour MPs and a small number of Conservative MPs.

Labour MPs Phil Wilson and Peter Kyle [have](#) also put forward a proposal whereby the WA would be approved by the House of Commons but for this to be made conditional on a binding public vote being held, with the options of the UK either leaving the EU under the terms of the WA or remaining in the EU under the UK's existing membership terms. This has the support of [some](#) Conservative MPs.

The Government opposes holding another referendum on EU membership. Official Labour party policy has been that the option should be left on the table, should Parliament vote down the Government's deal and it is not possible to hold a General Election. After the Labour party's alternative approach to Brexit set out in its amendment to the Government's motion on 27 February was defeated, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said that Labour would "back a public vote in order to prevent a damaging Tory Brexit or a disastrous no deal outcome" while also continuing "to push for the other available options to prevent those outcomes, including a close economic relationship based on our credible alternative plan or a general election." However, significant numbers of Labour MPs reportedly oppose holding another referendum.

¹³ For further analysis see House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP8461 [Brexit: Article 50 TEU at the CJEU](#), 10 December 2018.

2. E-petition

[E-petition 239706](#)

Revoke Art.50 if there is no Brexit plan by the 25 of February.

On the 25th of November both the UK Government and the European Union came to an agreement on the proposed departure from the EU. After an historic defeat in the House of Commons on the 15th of January, 2019 by a majority of 230 votes the PM has now decided to go back to the EU over the backstop.

Under section 5 (ii) of the Belfast agreement, 1998, there is agreement to " to use best endeavours to reach agreement on the adoption of common policies, in areas where there is a mutual cross-border and allisland benefit "

The Government's own economic analysis published in November 2018, shows that a no deal scenario will have roughly a 10% decrease in GDP. The issue is that EU have firmly stated that they will not re-open negotiations with the UK over the agreement and remove the backstop.

Government Response

The Government's policy is not to revoke Article 50. Instead, we continue to work with Parliament to deliver a deal that ensures we leave the European Union, as planned, on March 29th. Revoking Article 50 would not respect the vote of the British people in the 2016 referendum.

Almost three quarters of the electorate took part in the referendum and 17.4 million people voted to leave the European Union. This is the highest number of votes cast for anything in UK electoral history and the biggest democratic mandate for a course of action ever directed at any UK Government. This result was then overwhelmingly confirmed by Parliament, who voted with clear and convincing majorities in both of its Houses for the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act. Then, in the 2017 General Election, over 80% of people then also voted for parties committing to respect the result of the referendum and it was the stated policy of both major parties that the decision of the people would be respected.

This Government has therefore been given a clear mandate to implement the will expressed by the electorate in the referendum, and to revoke Article 50 would undermine that mandate.

As it is the responsibility of this Government to deliver the exit that people voted for, and as Parliament is clear that it does not wish to deliver a 'no deal', we must secure a deal. However, the Government recognises the views expressed by the House that it cannot support the deal as it currently is, and we are now confident that a deal with changes to the backstop, combined with measures to address concerns over Parliament's role in the negotiation of the future relationship and commitments on workers' rights will secure the majority needed in the House to leave the EU with a deal.

The Prime Minister has therefore continued to work with Members across the House to deliver on the decision that the British people took in June 2016 and she will go back to Brussels to secure a deal this House can support.

Department for Exiting the European Union

3. Press articles

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

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

[UK urged to table 'acceptable' backstop remedies](#)

BBC News
07 March 2019

[Brexit: Theresa May suffers humiliating Lords defeat as peers demand UK stays in a customs union](#)

Independent
Lizzy Buchan
07 March 2019

[Brexit latest: EU negotiators give UK 48-hour deadline to come up with new plan for Irish backstop](#)

Independent
Jon Stone
07 March 2019

[Brexit: UK should offer new proposal, France's Europe minister says](#)

Guardian
Angelique Chrisafis
07 March 2019

[No-deal Brexit could push UK into recession, think tank warns](#)

Independent
Caitlin Morrison
06 March 2019

[Brexit meaningful vote will go ahead, says No 10, despite talks stalling](#)

Guardian
Daniel Boffey and Heather Stewart
06 March 2019

[Spain is blocking a Brexit compromise as part of a 'land grab' for Gibraltar, ministers told](#)

Daily Telegraph
Steven Swinford
06 March 2019

[Brexit threat to Northern Ireland jobs revealed by civil service chief](#)

Guardian
Lisa O'Carroll
06 March 2019

[UK may slash trade tariffs under a no-deal Brexit](#)

BBC News
06 March 2019

[DUP won't back Brexit without guarantees on backstop, says MP](#)

Guardian
Peter Walker
06 March 2019

[Brexit: David Sterling Northern Ireland's chief civil servant warns of 'grave' no-deal consequences](#)

BBC News
06 March 2019

[Brexiteer: Extend Article 50 by a longer period to maintain influence in Europe](#)

New European
Jonathon Read
04 March 2019

[Brexit delay: France would block Article 50 extension 'without a clear objective', Macron says](#)

Independent
Jon Stone
28 February 2019

[Any extension of article 50 must be a one-off, Brussels to insist](#)

Guardian
Daniel Boffey
28 February 2019

[Will EU resistance to extending Article 50 push MPs into voting for May's deal?](#)

New Statesman
Stephen Bush
28 February 2019

[Brexit vote: How can Article 50 be extended?](#)

BBC News
26 February 2019

[Why extending Article 50 looks inevitable - and the consequences of delaying Brexit](#)

Daily Telegraph
Asa Bennett
26 February 2019

[Irish prime minister Varadkar backs 'long extension' to Article 50](#)

Independent
Jon Stone
25 February 2019

[Brexit: What preparations are being made for a no-deal?](#)

BBC News
19 February 2019

France triggers 'hard Brexit' plan and warns that no deal is 'less and less unlikely'

Daily Telegraph
Henry Samuel
17 February 2019

What is a No Deal Brexit? 21 ways you'll be affected if UK leaves EU with no deal

Mirror
Dan Bloom
11 February 2019

Labour: only 'sensible' option to delay Brexit by extending article 50

Guardian
Peter Walker
06 February 2019

EU unveils minimal Brexit safety net for no deal

Politico
David M. Herszenhorn
19 December 2018

I drafted Article 50. We can and must delay Brexit for a referendum by Lord Kerr

Guardian
Lord Kerr
06 December 2018

4. Gov.uk

[PM statement to the House of Commons](#) [10 Downing Street, 26 February 2019](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Government's work to secure a Withdrawal Agreement that can command the support of this House.

A fortnight ago I committed to come back before the House today if the Government had not by now secured a majority for a Withdrawal Agreement and a Political Declaration.

In the two weeks since, my Rt Hon Friends the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the Attorney General and I have been engaging in focused discussions with the EU to find a way forward that will work for both sides. We are making good progress in that work.

I had a constructive meeting with President Juncker in Brussels last week, to take stock of the work done by our respective teams.

We discussed the legal changes that are required to guarantee that the Northern Ireland backstop cannot endure indefinitely.

On the Political Declaration, we discussed what additions or changes can be made to increase confidence in the focus and ambition of both sides in delivering the future partnership we envisage as soon as possible – and the Secretary of State is following this up with Michel Barnier.

I also had a number of positive meetings at the EU-League of Arab States Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, including with President Donald Tusk.

I have now spoken to the leaders of every single EU member state to explain the UK's position.

And the UK and EU teams are continuing their work and we agreed to review progress again in the coming days.

As part of these discussions, the UK and EU have agreed to consider a joint work stream to develop alternative arrangements to ensure the absence of a hard border in Northern Ireland.

This work will be done in parallel with the future relationship negotiations and is without prejudice to them.

Our aim is to ensure that, even if the full future relationship is not in place by the end of the implementation period, the backstop is not needed because we have a set of alternative arrangements ready to go.

I want to thank my Hon and Rt Hon friends for their contribution to this work and reaffirm that we are seized of the need to progress that work as quickly as possible.

President Juncker has already agreed that the EU will give priority to this work. And the Government expects that this will be an important strand of the next phase.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU will be having further discussions with Michel Barnier and we will announce details ahead of the Meaningful Vote.

We will also be setting up domestic structures to support this work, including ensuring we can take advice from external experts involved in customs processes around the world, from businesses who trade with the EU and beyond – and, of course, from colleagues across the House.

This will all be supported by civil service resource as well as funding for the Government to help develop, test and pilot proposals which can form part of these alternative arrangements.

Mr Speaker, I know what this House needs in order to support a Withdrawal Agreement.

The EU knows what is needed.

And I am working hard to deliver it.

As well as changes to the backstop, we are also working across a number of other areas to build support for the Withdrawal Agreement and to give the House confidence in the future relationship that the UK and EU will go on to negotiate.

This includes ensuring that leaving the EU will not lead to any lowering of standards in relation to workers' rights, environmental protections or health and safety.

Not only would giving up control go against the spirit of the referendum result, it would also mean accepting new EU laws automatically, even if they were to reduce workers' rights or change them in a way that was not right for us.

Instead, and in the interests of building support across the House, we are prepared to commit to giving Parliament a vote on whether it wishes to follow suit whenever the EU standards in areas such as workers' rights and health and safety are judged to have been strengthened.

The Government will consult with businesses and trade Unions as it looks at new EU legislation and decides how the UK should respond.

We will legislate to give our commitments on both non-regression and future developments force in UK law.

And following further cross-party talks, we will shortly be bringing forward detailed proposals to ensure that as we leave the EU, we not only protect workers' rights, but continue to enhance them.

Mr Speaker, as the government committed to the House last week, we are today publishing the paper assessing our readiness for No Deal.

I believe that if we have to, we will ultimately make a success of a No Deal.

But this paper provides an honest assessment of the very serious challenges it would bring in the short-term – and further reinforces why the best way for this House to honour the referendum result is to leave with a deal.

As I committed to the House, the Government will today table an amendable motion for debate tomorrow.

But I know Members across the House are genuinely worried that time is running out, that if the Government doesn't come back with a further meaningful vote or it loses that vote, Parliament won't have time to make its voice heard on the next steps. I know too that members across the House are deeply concerned by the effect of the current uncertainty on businesses.

So today I want to reassure the House by making three further commitments.

First, we will hold a second Meaningful Vote by Tuesday 12 March at the latest.

Second, if the Government has not won a Meaningful Vote by Tuesday 12 March then it will – in addition to its obligations to table a neutral, amendable motion under section 13 of the EU Withdrawal Act – table a motion to be voted on by Wednesday 13 March at the latest, asking this House if it supports leaving the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement and a framework for a future relationship on 29 March.

So the United Kingdom will only leave without a deal on 29 March if there is explicit consent in this House for that outcome.

Third, if the House, having rejected leaving with the deal negotiated with the EU, then rejects leaving on 29 March without a withdrawal agreement and future framework, the Government will, on 14 March, bring forward a motion on whether Parliament wants to seek a short limited extension to Article 50 – and if the House votes for an extension, seek to agree that extension approved by the House with the EU, and bring forward the necessary legislation to change the exit date commensurate with that extension.

These commitments all fit the timescale set out in the Private Members Bill in the name of the Rt Hon Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford.

They are commitments I am making as Prime Minister and I will stick by them, as I have previous commitments to make statements and table amendable motions by specific dates.

Let me be clear, I do not want to see Article 50 extended. Our absolute focus should be on working to get a deal and leaving on 29 March.

An extension beyond the end of June would mean the UK taking part in the European Parliament elections. What kind of message would that send to the more than 17 million people who voted to leave the EU

nearly three years ago now? And the House should be clear that a short extension – not beyond the end of June – would almost certainly have to be a one-off. If we had not taken part in the European Parliament elections, it would be extremely difficult to extend again, so it would create a much sharper cliff edge in a few months' time.

An extension cannot take no deal off the table. The only way to do that is to revoke Article 50, which I shall not do, or agree a deal.

Now, I have been clear throughout this process that my aim is to bring the country back together.

This House can only do that by implementing the decision of the British people.

The Government is determined to do so in a way that commands the support of this House.

But just as government requires the support of this House in delivering the vote of the British people, so the House should respect the proper functions of the Government.

Tying the Government's hands by seeking to commandeer the order paper would have far-reaching implications for the way in which the United Kingdom is governed and the balance of powers and responsibilities in our democratic institutions.

And it would offer no solution to the challenge of finding a deal which this House can support.

Neither would seeking an extension to Article 50 now make getting a deal any easier.

Ultimately the choices we face would remain unchanged – leave with a deal, leave with no deal, or have no Brexit.

So when it comes to that motion tomorrow, the House needs to come together, as we did on 29 January, and send a clear message that there is a stable majority in favour of leaving the EU with a deal.

A number of Hon and Rt Hon Members have understandably raised the rights of EU citizens living in the UK.

As I set out last September, following the Salzburg Summit – even in the event of no deal, the rights of the three million EU citizens living in the UK will be protected.

That is our guarantee to them.

They are our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues. We want them to stay.

But a separate agreement for citizens' rights is something the EU have been clear they do not have the legal authority for.

If it is not done in a Withdrawal Agreement, these issues become a matter member states unless the EU were to agree a new mandate to take this forward.

At the very start of this process the UK sought to separate out this issue, but that was something which the EU has been consistent on.

However, my Right Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary has written to all of his counterparts and we are holding further urgent discussions with member states to seek assurances on the rights of UK citizens.

I urge all EU countries to make this guarantee and end the uncertainty for these citizens.

I hope that the government's efforts can give the House – and EU Citizens here in the UK – the reassurances they need and deserve.

Mr Speaker, for some Hon and Rt Hon Members, taking the United Kingdom out of the European Union is the culmination of a long and sincerely fought campaign.

For others, leaving the EU goes against much that they have stood for and fought for with equal sincerity for just as long.

But Parliament gave the choice to the people.

In doing so we told them we would honour their decision.

Mr Speaker, that remains the resolve of this side of the House.

This House voted to trigger Article 50, and this House has a responsibility to deliver on the result.

The very credibility of our democracy is at stake.

By leaving the EU with a deal, we can move our country forward.

Even with the uncertainty we face today, we have more people in work than ever before, wages growing at their fastest rate for a decade and debt falling as a share of the economy.

If we can leave with a deal, end the uncertainty and move on beyond Brexit, we can do so much more to deliver real economic progress to every part of country.

So I hope tomorrow this House can show that...

...with legally binding changes on the backstop...

...commitments to protect workers' rights and the environment...

...an enhanced role for Parliament in the next phase of negotiations...

...and a determination to address the wider concerns of those who voted to leave...

...we will have a deal that this House can support.

And in doing so, that we send a clear message: That this House is resolved to honour the result of the referendum and leave the European Union with a deal.

And I commend this statement to the House.

5. PQs

[Brexit](#)

28 Feb 2019 | 909509

Asked by: Sir Henry Bellingham

What steps the Government is taking to prepare contingency plans for the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department for Exiting the European Union

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the Government's top priority. Our no deal preparations will ensure the country is prepared for every eventuality. Extensive preparations have been underway for over two years and these are continuing.

We have passed critical legislation, signed international agreements, recruited additional staff and guaranteed certain EU funding in a no deal scenario. Border Force is recruiting c.600 additional Border Force officers and HMRC have already hired over 2,300 extra staff for Brexit, including additional operational staff, like customs inspectors.

In September 2018, and again in December and February, HMRC sent letters to the 145,000 VAT registered businesses who currently trade with the EU advising them what action they need to take on customs in the event of no deal.

We have also published and updated 106 specific technical notices to help businesses, citizens and consumers prepare for a no-deal scenario.

[UK Trade with EU](#)

28 Feb 2019 | 225575

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, whether discussions have taken place with EU officials on the adoption of a customs union since the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement on 15 January 2019.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Government's position on customs is as set out in the Political Declaration and we seek to further agree these proposals in the next phase of the negotiations.

The UK and the EU will put in place ambitious customs arrangements, using all facilitative arrangements and technologies, which meet the objectives and principles set out in the Political Declaration, including recognising the development of an independent trade policy by the UK beyond the economic partnership with the EU.

The Government has been clear in its customs proposals that we want an independent trade policy, which is not possible inside a customs union.

[Brexit](#)

28 Feb 2019 | 219386

Asked by: Jonathan Edwards

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is drawing up plans for specific nations and regions of the UK to boost the economy in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Answering member: Kelly Tolhurst | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Government continues to work towards a deal and we are confident of securing a relationship with the EU which maintains the current, liberalised access and frictionless trade we enjoy. This is in the interest of business across all regions of the UK.

We are committed to supporting vital industries in any EU exit scenario, including taking action to provide continuity for UK business in trading arrangements wherever possible. Extensive engagement continues between Government and industry to help businesses prepare for different scenarios.

Our modern Industrial Strategy has set out a long-term approach to ensure that we're building an economy fit for the future and will help us make the best of our relations with Europe and beyond. This includes a range of measures aimed at increasing investment to all regions of the UK from the private and public sector, from cutting business taxes, slashing red tape to investing in new scientific infrastructure on a record scale.

[Trade](#)

27 Feb 2019 | HL13708

Asked by: Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of a no-deal Brexit on future global trade.

Answering member: Baroness Fairhead | Department for International Trade

Our priority remains getting approval for the deal we have negotiated with our European partners. Alongside this, the Government will continue to do the responsible thing and prepare for all eventualities with partner countries, including a 'no deal' scenario. Details of these preparations can be found in the Government paper "Implications for business and trade of a No Deal exit on 29 March" published on the 26 February.

Regardless of how we leave, for the first time in more than four decades, the UK will have an independent trade policy once we exit from the EU. We will deploy all the tools at our disposal and tailor our trade policy to the strengths and requirements of the UK economy.

The Government is preparing for an ambitious programme of trade negotiations and enhanced market access. We have consulted on our first four potential free trade agreements (FTAs), with Australia, New

Zealand, the United States and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The Government has committed to publishing Scoping Assessments prior to launching negotiations on new FTAs. We will then publish an impact assessment of any concluded agreement prior to ratification.

While we are looking to forge new agreements, the Government is also seeking continuity for our existing EU trade agreements as we leave the European Union. We have made good progress, signing trade continuity agreements with Switzerland, Chile, the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) states, the Faroe Islands, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority.

Trade Agreements

25 Feb 2019 | HL13599

Asked by: Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government which countries have free trade agreements with the EU but have not yet signed such agreements with the UK.

Answering member: Baroness Fairhead | Department for International Trade

The Government recently updated the House on our progress to achieve continuity of our existing free trade agreements, and I refer the noble Lord to the Government's written statement published on 21 February 2019. We will continue to inform the House as soon as further agreements are signed.

You can find a list of all the EU's Free Trade Agreements here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/negotiations-and-agreements/>

Borders: Northern Ireland

22 Feb 2019 | HL13726

Asked by: Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish details of any contracts they have signed relating to technological solutions to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland; and whether any of those contracts include matters beyond proofs of concept.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Government has been in discussions with technology companies for many months. While no contracts have yet been signed, in the event of doing so we will follow the usual process.

Parliament has been clear in what is needed to unite behind a Withdrawal Agreement: namely, legally binding changes to the backstop. The Prime Minister has set out three ways in which legally binding changes to the backstop could be achieved. First, the backstop could be replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. Secondly, there could be a legally binding time limit to the existing backstop, or thirdly, there could be a legally binding unilateral exit clause to that backstop.

The Prime Minister and President Juncker agreed that our teams should hold further talks to find a way forward, both will meet again before the end of February to take stock of those discussions.

[UK Membership of EU](#)

21 Feb 2019 | HL13667

Asked by: Lord Saatchi

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the proposals of the Lead Not Leave campaign, in particular to move from debating terms for leaving the EU to terms for remaining in the EU, and (2) the potential benefits of the UK remaining in the EU on the basis of guarantees of constitutional and institutional reform of the EU.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Government's policy is to work with Parliament to deliver a deal that ensures we leave the European Union, as planned, on March 29th.

Revoking Article 50 would not only betray the vote of the British people in the 2016 referendum, but it would betray the mandates on which the majority of MP's were elected into Parliament.

The British people gave a clear instruction to leave and we are delivering on that instruction.

[Brexit: Northern Ireland](#)

21 Feb 2019 | 220794

Asked by: Hilary Benn

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, whether the Government has made an economic assessment of the Malthouse compromise proposals.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

We have engaged with this proposal sincerely and positively, and the principle of alternative arrangements has already been accepted by the EU as a way out of the backstop. The Prime Minister and President Juncker agreed that our teams should hold further talks to find a way forward.

The Government has delivered on its commitment to provide appropriate analysis to Parliament. The analysis, published in November 2018, focuses on the long-term economic impacts after the UK's new relationship with the EU comes into effect. It does not seek to capture any short-term changes and does not account for specific factors relating to varying border arrangements. The analysis does not model the Backstop as it is an insurance policy which neither side wish to use; and if triggered, would be explicitly temporary. For the same reason it is not practical to model alternatives to the backstop.

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

20 Feb 2019 | 220749

Asked by: Ben Bradshaw

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of the UK's potential ability to influence European foreign policy after the UK has left the EU and no longer attends meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK and EU partners will continue to face the same threats and share the same priorities. The UK will leave the formal structures of EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, including meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council, but the Political Declaration sets out a new model of cooperation that will enable us to continue to cooperate closely on foreign and security policy issues, where in our mutual interest. This will provide mutual influence between independent actors. We hear repeatedly from our EU partners that they want to cooperate closely with us, a desire shared by this Government. We will continue to do this bilaterally, as well as through European and international fora, and multilateral bodies, during and after the Implementation Period.

Immigration Controls: Republic of Ireland

19 Feb 2019 | HL13453

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of the Republic of Ireland about allowing (1) Irish, and (2) UK citizens the freedom to (a) come and go between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and (b) seek employment and establish residence in the UK, without special formalities, both before and after Brexit.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office

The Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements allow British and Irish citizens to travel freely within the CTA without seeking permission from the authorities. They also provide for British citizens in Ireland and Irish citizens in the UK to be able to work in either country without any requirement to obtain permission from the authorities.

These arrangements pre-date membership of the EU. The UK and Ireland are working closely to protect these rights after the UK leaves the EU.

Brexit

19 Feb 2019 | 221782

Asked by: Emma Reynolds

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, whether under the Treaties of the European Union, the European Parliament must approve a withdrawal agreement between the UK and the EU; and on what date the last meeting of the European Parliament will be before elections to that Parliament.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department for Exiting the European Union

As outlined in Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the Withdrawal Agreement shall be concluded by the Council on behalf of the EU after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament. The last sitting day of the European Parliament ahead of its elections is 18 April 2019.

[Food Supply](#)**18 Feb 2019 | 220765****Asked by: Jim Cunningham**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with food distribution and transport companies on the potential effects on that sector of the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Answering member: David Rutley | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

As a responsible Government, we are preparing for all eventualities including that of leaving the EU without a deal. Extensive work to prepare for a no deal scenario has been underway for the last two years to ensure the country continues to operate as smoothly as possible from the day we leave.

The Government has well established ways of working with the food industry on food supply chain issues and we are using these to support preparations for leaving the EU. This includes working with Defra's long established Food Chain Emergency Liaison Group (FCELG), which allows Government and industry to work together to plan for and respond to food supply disruption. The FCELG membership includes trade bodies from across the agri-food supply and distribution sectors and also includes other relevant Government departments, devolved administrations and agencies.

Defra will continue to work closely with food industry stakeholders to understand the impacts of a no deal scenario on the food and drink industry, as well as the contingency planning measures being taken by industry.

[Brexit](#)**18 Feb 2019 | 219381****Asked by: Jonathan Edwards**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the Government's Project After plans to improve the economy in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

Answering member: David Lidington | Cabinet Office

The Government continues to prepare for a range of possible scenarios to maintain continuity of existing trading relationships, including one in which we do not reach an agreement with the EU on the terms of our withdrawal. As the Chancellor said to the Treasury Select Committee,

should there be no deal, we would react to that in the usual way and support the economy through whatever transition is needed to get to a new, appropriate equilibrium.

European Economic Area and European Free Trade Association
15 Feb 2019 | 218752

Asked by: Jim Cunningham

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Governments of EEA and EFTA member states on the future of trade with those countries in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Answering member: George Hollingbery | Department for International Trade

As we leave the EU, the UK remains committed to continuing our close trading relationships with our EEA and EFTA partners. The Government is working to ensure there is no disruption to our trading relationships, including maintaining the effects of our existing preferential trade arrangements with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Most recently, the Secretary of State signed trade agreements with Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Ministers and officials in the Department for International Trade continue to work closely with counterparts in the EEA States to put in place new arrangements should the UK leaving the EU without a deal. Fully replicating the effects of the existing arrangements will be challenging if we do not reach a deal with the EU due to the high degree of alignment with the EU internal market.

World Trade Organisation: Trade Agreements
14 Feb 2019 | 218821

Asked by: Jo Stevens

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government has a WTO trade schedule prepared for 29 March 2019.

Answering member: George Hollingbery | Department for International Trade

The Government has prepared and lodged at the WTO UK-only schedules for both goods and services. These were lodged on 24 July 2018 for goods and 3 December 2018 for services. Copies were placed in the House Library. Both are ready to become operational on 29 March 2019 if a Withdrawal Agreement is not agreed with the EU.

Borders: Northern Ireland
13 Feb 2019 | HL13411

Asked by: Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the speech by the Prime Minister on 20 July 2018 in Belfast, what assessment they have made of whether there may be technological solutions to issues relating to the Irish border after Brexit.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Prime Minister in her 5 February speech in Belfast reaffirmed the UK Government commitment to delivering a Brexit that ensures no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, including any physical infrastructure. While technology could play a part in this, and alternative arrangements are being looked at, these must be ones that can be made to work for the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.

[Brexit](#)

13 Feb 2019 | 217644

Asked by: Layla Moran

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of civil servants working full-time for two days on meetings related to a compromise plan for exiting the European Union.

Answering member: Kwasi Kwarteng | Department for Exiting the European Union

Civil servants from across Whitehall are working on a variety of projects and policy areas to support the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

The Department does not hold information on the costs borne by other departments and therefore is unable to provide this information.

Further to this, it should be noted that the Department does not record expenditure on specific activities; it records expenditure on a functional basis. It is, therefore, not possible for the Department to attribute staff costs to specific projects or activities.

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Bill 2017-19](#)

12 Feb 2019 | 218319

Asked by: Stephen Kinnock

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, when his Department plans to publish the EU withdrawal agreement Bill.

Answering member: Kwasi Kwarteng | Department for Exiting the European Union

As we have always said, we will introduce the Bill as soon as possible once the Withdrawal Agreement has been approved by Parliament.

It would be presumptive to introduce or publish the legislation implementing the Withdrawal Agreement before Parliament has approved the terms of the final deal.

The Government is committed to doing everything it can to ensure that Parliament has the opportunity to scrutinise the Bill in the time available.

Borders: Northern Ireland

11 Feb 2019 | 217576

Asked by: Bridget Phillipson

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what proposals for alternative arrangements for the Irish backstop are being considered.

Answering member: Stephen Barclay | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Political Declaration is clear that the UK and EU should work together and exchange information on facilitative arrangements and technologies. This sits alongside the UK and the EU's existing commitment to developing alternative arrangements to replace the backstop.

The Government plans to continue discussion with members from around the House in the coming days to finalise proposals with which to go back to the EU. While technology could play a part in this, and alternative arrangements are being looked at, these must be ones that can be made to work for the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Borders: Northern Ireland

11 Feb 2019 | 217575

Asked by: Bridget Phillipson

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what estimate he has made of the amount of time that the Civil Service has spent on assessing the viability of alternative arrangements for the Irish border for when the UK leaves the EU.

Answering member: Stephen Barclay | Department for Exiting the European Union

There is no specific estimate of time which has been spent on assessing the viability of alternative arrangements for the Irish border to current Government policy. Since the beginning of the process, civil servants have been looking at options, and will continue to support ministers in the development of Government policy.

Brexit

08 Feb 2019 | 216980

Asked by: Chris Ruane

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, how many ongoing workstreams there are throughout central Government on preparations for leaving the EU without a deal.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department for Exiting the European Union

Delivering the deal negotiated with the EU remains the Government's top priority. However, the Government is accelerating no deal preparations to ensure the country is prepared for every eventuality, as

this is the responsible thing to do. As part of this, we are monitoring over 300 projects being delivered by departments across Government.

[Brexit: Government Bills](#)

05 Feb 2019 | HL13055

Asked by: Lord Bassam of Brighton

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Callanan on 22 January (HL12635 and HL12636), how they will prioritise the remaining bills they consider need to be enacted before the UK leaves the EU on 29 March; and whether they will list them in that priority order.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Government has undertaken extensive work to identify the primary legislation essential to deliver our exit from the EU in different scenarios. We are preparing for all potential outcomes and we are committed to legislate as needed to deliver our exit.

Much of this legislation is already in place, for example the Nuclear Safeguards Act and the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act, and a number of important statutory instruments.

The remaining legislation will be prioritised appropriately to ensure the measures needed are in place before the UK leaves the EU. As is always the case, Ministers will need to explain to each House the priority which should be accorded to each Bill as it is considered.

[Borders: Northern Ireland](#)

05 Feb 2019 | HL13027

Asked by: Lord Rogan

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions have been held with the EU about the erection of physical infrastructure on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

The UK Government is clear that, in the event of no deal, we will do everything in our power to prevent a return to a hard border. In such a scenario, we must continue to respect our unique relationship with Ireland, with whom we share a land border and who are co-signatories of the Belfast Agreement.

We recognise that we would need to take forward discussions with the Irish government and the European Commission in the event of a no deal on the best way to achieve this.

Borders: Northern Ireland

05 Feb 2019 | 215202

Asked by: Kate Hollern

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what steps are being taken to avoid a hard border in Ireland in the event that the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement is rejected by Parliament.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

The best way to guarantee no hard border remains delivering a deal with the EU. Both the UK and Ireland have said they will do everything in our power to avoid a hard border in any scenario. But, given that we haven't yet agreed a deal, the Government's continued duty is to prepare for every eventuality, including a no deal scenario.

The UK Government is clear that, in the event of no deal, we will do everything in our power to prevent a return to a hard border. In such a scenario, we must continue to respect our unique relationship with Ireland, with whom we share a land border and who are co-signatories of the Belfast Agreement. The UK Government is also firmly committed to maintaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) and to protecting the rights enjoyed by UK and Irish nationals when in each other's state, regardless of the terms of our withdrawal from the EU.

The Government has published a technical notice on travelling within the CTA, which can be found on gov.uk.

Brexit: Northern Ireland

04 Feb 2019 | 214578

Asked by: Jo Stevens

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, with reference to the Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union, if he will place in the Library copies of his Departmental papers in relation to the viability of placing alternative arrangements at the border on the island of Ireland.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

Parliament will of course need to ratify the agreement that the government reaches with the European Union. A majority of members of the House have said they would support a deal with changes to the backstop. As such, the Prime Minister will now take this mandate forward and seek to obtain legally binding changes to the Withdrawal Agreement that deal with concerns on the backstop while guaranteeing no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

There are a number of ways that we could do this, and the Prime Minister will work constructively with MPs to see how we could take this forward.

[Brexit: Northern Ireland](#)**04 Feb 2019 | 214577****Asked by: Jo Stevens**

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, with reference to the Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union what (a) technologies and (b) methods are included in the term alternative arrangements in relation to the Northern Ireland backstop.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Withdrawal Agreement sets out a commitment to “alternative arrangements” to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and the Political Declaration is clear that the UK and EU should work together and exchange information on facilitative arrangements and technologies. The Government plans to continue discussion with members from around the House in the coming days to finalise proposals with which to go back to the EU.

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#)**04 Feb 2019 | 214481****Asked by: Hilary Benn**

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, pursuant to his oral contribution of 29 January 2019, Official Report, column 755, on the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which experts he proposes to consult on the technical points raised in the proposals of the hon. Member for North West Hampshire; and if he will make a statement on their response.

Answering member: Robin Walker | Department for Exiting the European Union

A number of members of the House have suggested ways to achieve alternative arrangements. This sits alongside the UK and the EU’s existing commitment to developing alternative arrangements to replace the backstop. The Political Declaration is also clear that this includes looking at how facilitative arrangements and technologies can avoid a hard border. Such arrangements are also referenced in the text of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The Government plans to continue discussion with members from around the House in the coming days to finalise proposals to go back to the EU.

[Department for Exiting the European Union: Brexit](#)**31 Jan 2019 | 213435****Asked by: Anne-Marie Trevelyan**

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what progress he has made in laying statutory instruments related to EU exit preparedness; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department for Exiting the European Union

The Government has made good progress in laying the up to 600 statutory instruments required by exit day to ensure a functioning statute book. As of 30 January, the Government has laid over 60 per cent of the exit statutory instruments required, and my department has laid 7 of these. All exit related statutory instruments are published on <http://www.legislation.gov.uk> and include 'EU Exit' in their title.

Brexit

28 Jan 2019 | 210722

Asked by: Paul Sweeney

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterpart on extending Article 50.

Answering member: Kwasi Kwarteng | Department for Exiting the European Union

As the Prime Minister said in her statement to the House on Monday 21st January, the Government is opposed to extending Article 50 and we are committed to leaving the EU on 29 March 2019. In any case, the EU are very unlikely simply to agree to extend Article 50 without a plan for how we are going to approve a deal.

Brexit: Negotiations

24 Jan 2019 | 795 cc803-5

Asked by: Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union that the United Kingdom can unilaterally withdraw from clauses 2 to 5 of Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, whether they will cease Brexit negotiations through the European Commission and offer European Union citizens through the Council of Ministers continuing (1) free trade under the World Trade Organization, (2) reciprocal residence for a period to be agreed, and (3) security co-operation, before they agree any financial settlement on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

Answered by: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

My Lords, the CJEU in the case of Wightman held that a member state can unilaterally revoke its notice to withdraw under Article 50. Such a revocation must be unequivocal and unconditional. However, let me be clear that, regardless, the Government's policy has not changed, and we will not revoke the Article 50 notice. A clear majority of the electorate voted to leave the EU, and we have to respect that result.

[Brexit: Referendums](#)**13 Dec 2018 | HL11861****Asked by: Lord Myners**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support a second referendum on Brexit.

Answering member: Lord Callanan | Department for Exiting the European Union

After a period of sustained public debate, a clear majority of the electorate voted to leave the EU in June 2016 with the highest number of votes cast for anything in UK electoral history. We must respect both the will of the British people, and the democratic process which delivered this result. As such, it is a matter of Government policy that there will not be a second referendum on our exit from the EU.

[Brexit](#)**10 Dec 2018 | 198170****Asked by: Jim Cunningham**

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what contingency plans his Department has made in the event that the (a) EU withdrawal agreement and (b) Political Declaration are not approved by Parliament.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Department for Exiting the European Union

The government has successfully reached a deal with the EU and delivering the deal is its top priority.

The final deal that Parliament will be voting on means that we will leave the EU in a smooth and orderly way on 29 March 2019. It sets the framework for a future relationship that delivers in our national interest. It takes back control of our borders, laws and money, it protects jobs, security and the integrity of the United Kingdom, and it delivers in ways that many said could simply not be done.

Anything other than straightforward approval of the deal will bring with it huge uncertainty for business, consumers and citizens.

However, as a responsible government we have undertaken extensive work over the past two years to prepare for a potential no deal scenario.

We have published 106 technical notices to help businesses and citizens to prepare for March 2019 in the unlikely event that we leave the EU without a deal. In addition to these technical notices, we have already successfully passed critical legislation, signed international agreements, recruited additional staff and guaranteed certain EU funding in preparation for a no deal scenario.

6. Other Parliamentary material

6.1 Debates

[Further Discussions with the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union](#)

27 Feb 2019 | Debates | House of Lords | 796 cc238-292

[UK's Withdrawal from the EU](#)

27 Feb 2019 | Debates | House of Commons | 655 cc365-449

[UK's Withdrawal from the EU](#)

14 Feb 2019 | Debates | House of Commons | 654 c1160

[EU Withdrawal](#)

13 Feb 2019 | Debates | House of Lords | 795 cc1851-1936

[Leaving the European Union](#)

4 Feb 2019 | House of Commons | 654 cc1-28WH

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#)

29 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 653 cc789-791

[Brexit: Parliamentary Approval of the Outcome of Negotiations with the European Union](#)

28 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 795 cc916-982

[Brexit: Further Referendum](#)

17 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 795 cc2109-151

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

15 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 652 cc1019-1130

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

14 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 795 cc11-55

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

14 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 795 cc66-118

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

14 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 652 cc861-979

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

11 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 652 cc697-778

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

10 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 794 cc2319-2370

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

10 Jan 2019 | Debates | House of Commons | 652 cc567-687

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

09 Jan 2019 | House of Lords | 794 cc2220-294

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

09 Jan 2019 | House of Commons | 652 cc385-508

[Leaving the EU: No Deal](#)

19 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 651 cc861-906

[EU Withdrawal Agreement](#)

18 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 651 cc674-725

[Exiting the European Union: Meaningful Vote](#)

11 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 651 cc171-226

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

06 Dec 2018 | House of Lords | 794 cc1118-1198

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

06 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 650 cc1080-1212

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

05 Dec 2018 | House of Lords | 794 cc1023-1108

[Brexit: Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

05 Dec 2018 | House of Lords | 794 cc977-1013

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

05 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 650 cc898-1024

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act](#)

04 Dec 2018 | House of Commons | 650 cc745-861

[Brexit: Negotiations](#)

20 Nov 2018 | House of Lords | 794 cc158-230

[EU Withdrawal Agreement: Legal Advice](#)

13 Nov 2018 | House of Commons | 649 cc189-236

[Legislating for the Withdrawal Agreement](#)

10 Sep 2018 | House of Commons | 646 cc491-564

6.2 Early Day Motions

[Use of troops in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal](#)

EDM 2075

12 February 2019

Jonathan Edwards

That this House notes the Secretary of State for Defence's statement that 3,500 troops are on standby to deal with contingencies in the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal; further notes that the Ministry of Defence has put in place the necessary order to enable the calling-up of reserves in this situation; expresses concern that the British

Government has failed to provide details about its mission plan for such troops; notes with alarm claims in the Sunday Times that the British Government is discussing the imposition of martial law in the event of civil unrest; further notes that the last time states of emergency were declared in the UK was in the early 1970s to deal with the effects of strikes in essential services; believes that a democratic society is not a militarised society; and calls on the Secretary of State for Defence to rule out the use of armed forces personnel for police functions or for social control, and to make clear that the possibility of martial law is not under consideration.

[Voting on choices for the UK leaving the EU](#)

EDM 1937

17 December 2018

Frank Field

That this House believes the public has a right to know how Members would vote on the different choices facing the country regarding the UK leaving the EU; believes that Members should have an opportunity as soon as possible to register their vote on a range of options including a reformed Northern Irish backstop, leaving the European Union with no deal, extending Article 50, entering into a future Norway-style relationship with the European Union, entering into a future Canada-style relationship with the European Union, and holding a new referendum; notes that this course of action could act as a powerful guide to the Government during its ongoing discussions with the European Union; and calls for sufficient time to be granted for this course of action to take place.

[Revocability of Article 50](#)

EDM 1904

6 December 2018

Hywel Williams

That this House notes the initial opinion of the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice, Campos Sanchez-Bordona, that the UK has the right unilaterally to revoke Article 50 and to stay in the EU before its planned departure date on 29 March 2019; further notes that the European Court of Justice will give its final judgment on the case at 8am on Monday 11 December; urges the Prime Minister to use this opportunity to seek a sensible solution to the chaos caused by Brexit; and calls on the UK Government to hold a People's Vote deciding between the Prime Minister's negotiated Brexit deal and maintaining the UK's current membership of the EU Single Market and Customs Union.

6.3 Statements

[Leaving the European Union](#)

26 Feb 2019 | Ministerial statements | House of Commons | 655
cc165-202

[EU Exit Update](#)

26 Feb 2019 | Written statements | House of Commons |
HCWS1361

[Trade Continuity under a "No Deal" scenario](#)

21 Feb 2019 | Written statements | House of Commons |
HCWS1352

[Leaving the EU](#)

12 Feb 2019 | 654 cc731-771

[Leaving the EU](#)

21 Jan 2019 | 653 cc24-67

[Leaving the EU](#)

14 Jan 2019 | 652 cc823-855

[Exiting the European Union](#)

10 Dec 2018 | 651 cc23-70

[EU Exit: Article 50](#)

10 Dec 2018 | 651 cc89-104

[EU Exit](#)

06 Dec 2018 | HCWS1152

[Leaving the EU](#)

26 Nov 2018 | 650 cc23-67

[Exiting the European Union](#)

26 Nov 2018 | HCWS1110

[Progress on EU Negotiations](#)

22 Nov 2018 | 649 cc1095-1138

7. Further reading

Government Policy Papers

[Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

Department for Exiting the European Union
25 November 2018

[Progress on the UK's exit from, and future relationship with, the European Union](#)

Department for Exiting the European Union
14 November 2018

Library Insight articles

[The Brexit timetable: One promise. Two weeks. Three key votes](#)

1 March 2019

[Extending Article 50 and European Parliament elections](#)

19 February 2019

[Yvette Cooper's Private Member's Bill explained](#)

19 February 2019

[What legislation is required for a 'no deal' Brexit?](#)

15 February 2019

[No-deal Brexit and WTO: Article 24 explained](#)

4 February 2019

[A 'Plan B' considered and two instructions given: Where next for Parliament and Brexit?](#)

30 January 2019

[The 'Malthouse Compromise': What is 'Plan C'?](#)

29 January 2019

[What are the 'other' Brexit options?](#)

28 January 2019

Library Briefing Papers

[Further Article 50 Discussions with the EU](#)

Lords Library Note LLN-2019-0023
21 February 2019

[European Union \(Withdrawal\) \(No. 4\) Bill 2017-19](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-7276
19 February 2019

[Extending Article 50: could Brexit be delayed?](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8496
12 February 2019

[What if there's no Brexit deal?](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8397
8 February 2019

[Brexit: Proposals for the future UK-EU relationship](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8483
25 January 2019

[EU assurances to the UK on Brexit](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8474
16 January 2019

[The Political Declaration on the Framework for Future EU-UK Relations](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8454
21 December 2018

[Could the Withdrawal Agreement be terminated under international law?](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8463
20 December 2018

[The UK's EU Withdrawal Agreement](#)

Commons Briefing Paper CBP-8453
4 December 2018

Committee inquiry

[The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal: role of Parliament inquiry](#)

Exiting the European Union Committee

[The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal inquiry](#)

Exiting the European Union Committee

Other

[Impact of a 'No Deal' Brexit Across the UK](#) (accessed 06 March 2019)

Confederation of British Industry

[What CBI members are saying: Impact of a 'No Deal' Brexit Across the UK](#) (accessed 06 March 2019)

Confederation of British Industry

[Resolving the Brexit impasse](#)

UK in a Changing Europe
14 February 2019

[Response to the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration: Assessing the Options](#)

HC 1908
Exiting the European Union Committee
January 2019

[Response to the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration: Options for Parliament](#)

HC 1902
Exiting the European Union Committee
January 2019

[Can Article 50 be extended?](#)

Institute for Government
January 2019

[The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal - The Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration](#)

HC 1778
Exiting the European Union Committee
December 2018

[Questions and Answers: the consequences of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union without a ratified Withdrawal Agreement \(no deal Brexit\)](#)

European Commission
19 December 2018

[Options for deal or no deal](#)

Institute for Government
October 2018

[How to prepare if the UK leaves the EU with no deal](#)

Department for Exiting the European Union
Last updated October 2018

[No deal Brexit preparations](#)

Institute for Government
October 2018

[Cost of no deal revisited](#)

The UK in a Changing Europe
September 2018

[Exiting the European Union: Publications](#)

Department for Exiting the European Union

[Brexit](#) page on GOV.UK

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