

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

8th February 2019

Dear Constituent,

RE: EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the ongoing debate around the European Union (EU) *Withdrawal Agreement*.

I really appreciate you making me aware of your thoughts on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU and I will certainly reflect upon the points you raise as I consider further developments on this issue in the coming days. That said, I feel I must add that I remain completely opposed to suggestions of "cancelling" Brexit altogether, as well as holding a second referendum - both of which I consider to be unthinkable.

I have also enclosed a copy of my most recent statement of the 1st February 2019, which sets out my up-to-date thoughts on the latest developments, and the way forward, following the recent votes in the House of Commons, for your information. I hope that this will be of interest to you.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom".

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

My latest thoughts on our withdrawal from the European Union, following Tuesday's debate and votes

On Tuesday, following the defeat of the 'Meaningful Vote' on the 15th January, the House again considered the issue of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union in a short debate on a 'motion in neutral terms', which was the next legally required stage in the process. It was, however, possible for MPs to table amendments to express a view about their preferred way forward for the Government to take. Indeed, I considered tabling the below amendment, along with a number of colleagues, which encapsulates my concerns about the proposed *Withdrawal Agreement* which I voted against on the 15th January. I have pasted the text of that drafted amendment below:

At end, add "and would support a Withdrawal Agreement which –

- a. did not contain any reference to a backstop, and*
- b. provided that the amount of payments to be made by the United Kingdom to the European Union in consequence of the ratification of that Agreement shall not exceed £19 billion, with any obligation for balancing payments arising only upon ratification of a trade agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union."*

However, in the event, I decided to instead support the amendment tabled in the name of my senior backbench colleague, Sir Graham Brady MP, which attracted cross-party support, and the text of which I've also pasted below:

At end, add "and requires the Northern Ireland backstop to be replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border; supports leaving the European Union with a deal and would therefore support the Withdrawal Agreement subject to this change."

My decision for doing so predominantly revolved around the fact that I strongly felt the House needed to give a strong steer to the Prime Minister as she goes back to Brussels to renegotiate, about what would be required in order for the *Withdrawal Agreement* to be acceptable to the House to secure a majority of votes for it to pass.

I also supported it on the basis of the undertaking she gave on behalf of the Government to engage fully and in good faith with the proposal which has been drawn up by a number of colleagues, who hold a wide range of views on the European issue – ranging from prominent Eurosceptics such as Jacob Rees-Mogg MP and Steve Baker MP, to Nicky Morgan MP, Robert Buckland MP and Stephen Hammond MP, who all voted 'Remain' in the referendum.

Essentially, not only do I believe that their plan offers a sensible way forward, not least so we leave on the 29th March 2019, but it is also very striking that this is the first time that I can recall we have seen such significant collaborative working to find a majority commanding solution in the entirety of this process. I know quite a few people are wondering what the so-called ‘Malthouse Compromise’ looks like, so I have pasted below a short overview written by its authors:

“We have recognised that our country’s interest is served by accepting the referendum result and securing a withdrawal deal that gives our fellow citizens, and the businesses that sustain them, confidence and security.

This plan provides for exit from the EU on time with a new backstop, which would be acceptable indefinitely, but which incentivises us all to reach a new future relationship. It ensures there is no need for a hard border with Ireland.

The plan extends the Implementation Period (IP) to no later than the end of December 2021. It allows the UK to negotiate a new Future Relationship (FR) with our partners and allies without prejudice to the form of a particular trading relationship.

We also propose three safety nets for an exit that will guarantee continuity in the event of no deal.

We invite everyone across the Brexit divide to support this win-win compromise and move forward in the best interest of our nation.

Plan A is to revise the withdrawal agreement to deliver a smooth transition with one year’s additional IP until no later than the end of December 2021, and a new backstop protocol capable of securing wide consent.

Our Plan B is a triple safety net around exiting without a Withdrawal Agreement:

- We would continue to offer plan A, including bilateral cooperation on security.*
- Alongside we would agree the negotiated Implementation Period, until no later than the end of December 2021, as a standstill and in turn fulfil our financial obligations continuing to pay our net contribution and our international public law liabilities; and*
- We would offer a GATT 24 WTO-compliant standstill on trade with no tariffs, no quantitative restrictions and no new barriers for execution at the end of the initial IP should the FR not be in place by that time.*

This would allow time for both parties to prepare properly for WTO terms, but also provide a period in which the parties could obviate this outcome by negotiating a mutually beneficial future relationship.

In all circumstances we would guarantee the rights of EU citizens resident in the UK.

We believe that both these options should be offered to our allies in the EU and that this combination of measures can command a majority of the House of Commons.”

I really do believe that this ‘Malthouse’ plan offers a genuine way forward, which a sufficient number of MPs could coalesce around to support a *Withdrawal Agreement* being reached with the European Union. I therefore concluded that the Brady amendment offered the space required, and commanded the widespread support needed, to try to achieve that end, and so I voted for it.

That support also came in the context of the other amendments which were debated and voted upon. In particular, it should be noted that not a single amendment was tabled in support of a second referendum, suggesting the lack of realistic support for holding a second vote amongst MP - a reality advocates for it were keen not to expose, hence their decision not to table an amendment.

However, in the debate there was strong opposition to the principle of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit; albeit I do not share it, and it is simply not enough for the House just to say it does not wish to see it come to pass. As I have long maintained, whilst I am not starry-eyed about ‘no-deal’, I still maintain it is vital that option remains on the table as we negotiate with the European Union. Furthermore, that is what the law says, as not only did MPs vote for the *EU Withdrawal Act*, but of itself, invoking Article 50 means that if you don’t reach an agreement, it is inevitable that you leave without a deal as the automatic default. As such, it is right that the Government continues to prepare for every eventuality.

I was also pleased that various other amendments were defeated, which I consider would have advanced the underlying desire on the part of some MPs to delay or frustrate Brexit - whilst I maintain that we must leave the European Union on the 29th March 2019, come what may, Tuesday’s votes yet again demonstrated the very delicate parliamentary arithmetic and the challenges that presents in delivering Brexit, as I have so extensively written about at earlier stages of the process, which you can find here:

<https://www.votepursglove.co.uk/sites/www.votepursglove.co.uk/files/2019-01/Statement%20on%20Brexit%20and%20the%20way%20forward%20-%202011.01.19.pdf>

<https://www.votepursglove.co.uk/sites/www.votepursglove.co.uk/files/2018-12/Statement%20on%20Brexit%20and%20the%20way%20forward%20-%202021.12.18.pdf>

With Parliament having supported the Brady amendment, it seems to me that there is a way forward – the ball is now firmly back in the European Union’s court.

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