

# Speech: PM's Brexit speech in Stoke-on-Trent: 14 January 2019

Tomorrow, Members of Parliament will cast their votes on the Withdrawal Agreement on the terms of our departure from the European Union and the Political Declaration on our future relationship.

That vote in Westminster is a direct consequence of the votes that were cast by people here in Stoke, and in cities, towns and villages in every corner of the United Kingdom.

In June 2016, the British people were asked by MPs to take a decision: should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or should we leave?

In that campaign, both sides disagreed on many things, but on one thing they were united: what the British people decided, the politicians would implement.

In the run-up to the vote, the government sent a leaflet to every household making the case for remain. It stated very clearly: 'This is your decision. The government will implement what you decide.'

Those were the terms on which people cast their votes.

If a majority had backed remain, the UK would have continued as an EU member state.

No doubt the disagreements would have continued too, but the vast majority of people would have had no truck with an argument that we should leave the EU in spite of a vote to remain or that we should return to the question in another referendum.

On the rare occasions when Parliament puts a question to the British people directly we have always understood that their response carries a profound significance.

When the people of Wales voted by a margin of 0.3%, on a turnout of just over 50%, to endorse the creation of the Welsh Assembly, that result was accepted by Parliament.

Indeed we have never had a referendum in the United Kingdom that we have not honoured the result of.

Parliament understood this fact when it voted overwhelmingly to trigger Article 50.

And both major parties did so too when they stood on election manifestos in 2017 that pledged to honour the result of the referendum.

Yet, as we have seen over the last few weeks, there are some in Westminster

who would wish to delay or even stop Brexit and who will use every device available to them to do so.

I ask them to consider the consequences of their actions on the faith of the British people in our democracy.

The House of Commons did not say to the people of Scotland or Wales that despite voting in favour of a devolved legislature, Parliament knew better and would over-rule them. Or else force them to vote again.

What if we found ourselves in a situation where Parliament tried to take the UK out of the EU in opposition to a remain vote?

People's faith in the democratic process and their politicians would suffer catastrophic harm.

We all have a duty to implement the result of the referendum.

Ever since I reached an agreement with the EU on a Withdrawal Agreement and declaration on our future relationship I have argued that the consequences of Parliament rejecting it would be grave uncertainty – potentially leading to one of two outcomes.

Either a 'no deal' Brexit, that would cause turbulence for our economy, create barriers to security cooperation and disrupt people's daily lives.

Or the risk of no Brexit at all – for the first time in our history failing to implement the outcome of a statutory referendum and letting the British people down.

These alternatives both remain in play if the deal is rejected.

There are differing views on the threat that a no deal exit poses.

I have always believed that while we could ultimately make a success of no deal, it would cause significant disruption in the short term and it would be far better to leave with a good deal.

Others in the House of Commons take a different view and regard no deal as the ultimate threat to be avoided at all costs.

To those people I say this: the only ways to guarantee we do not leave without a deal are: to abandon Brexit, betraying the vote of the British people; or to leave with a deal, and the only deal on the table is the one MPs will vote on tomorrow night.

You can take no deal off the table by voting for that deal. And if no deal is as bad as you believe it is, it would be the height of recklessness to do anything else.

But while no deal remains a serious risk, having observed events at Westminster over the last seven days, it is now my judgment that the more likely outcome is a paralysis in Parliament that risks there being no

Brexit.

That makes it even more important that MPs consider very carefully how they will vote tomorrow night.

As I have said many times – the deal we have agreed is worthy of support for what it achieves for the British people.

Immigration policy back in the hands of people you elect – so we can build a system based around the skills people have to offer this country, not where they come from, and bring the overall numbers down. Sovereign control of our borders.

Decisions about how to spend the money you pay in taxes back under the control of people you elect – so we can spend the vast annual sums we send to Brussels as we chose, on priorities like our long-term plan for the NHS. Sovereign control of our money.

UK laws, not EU laws, governing this country – so the people you elect decide what the law of the land in our country is. Sovereign control of our laws.

Out of the Common Agricultural Policy – with our farmers supported by schemes we design to suit our own needs.

Out of the Common Fisheries Policy – so we decide who fishes in our waters and we can rebuild our fishing fleets for the future.

Retaking our seat at the World Trade Organisation, so we can strike trade deals around the world that work for British businesses and consumers.

The rights of valued EU citizens here guaranteed and reciprocal guarantees for UK citizens across Europe.

The partnerships between our police forces and security services, that protect us every day from threats that know no borders, sustained.

An implementation period that ensures our departure from the EU is smooth and orderly, protecting your jobs.

And yes a guarantee that the people of Northern Ireland can carry on living their lives just as they do now, whatever the future holds.

These are valuable prizes.

The deal honours the vote in the referendum by translating the people's instruction into a detailed and practical plan for a better future.

No one else has put forward an alternative which does this.

Compare that outcome to the alternatives of no deal or no Brexit.

With no deal we would have: no implementation period, no security co-operation, no guarantees for UK citizens overseas, no certainty for businesses and workers here in Stoke and across the UK, and changes to

everyday life in Northern Ireland that would put the future of our Union at risk.

And with no Brexit, as I have said, we would risk a subversion of the democratic process.

We would be sending a message from Westminster to communities like Stoke that your voices do not count.

The way to close-off both of these potential avenues of uncertainty is clear: it is for MPs to back the deal the government has negotiated and move our country forward into the bright future that awaits us.

I have always believed that there is a majority in the House of Commons for a smooth and orderly exit delivered by means of a withdrawal agreement.

That is why the government tabled the motion for the meaningful vote last month.

But it became clear that MPs' concerns about one particular aspect of the deal – the backstop preventing a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland in the event that we cannot reach agreement on our new relationship before the end of the implementation period – meant that there was no prospect of winning the vote.

So I suspended the debate to allow time for further discussions with the EU to address those concerns.

Today I have published the outcome of those discussions in the form of letters between the UK government and the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council.

I listened very carefully to the concerns that MPs from all sides expressed, particularly the concerns of my fellow Unionists from Northern Ireland.

In my discussions with the EU we explored a number of the suggestions made by MPs, both about how the backstop would operate and for how long.

The EU have said throughout that they would not renegotiate the Withdrawal Agreement or reopen its text for alteration, and that remained the case throughout my discussions at the December European Council and since.

I also pursued in these discussions a proposal for a fixed date – with legal force – guaranteeing the point at which the future partnership would come into force. Because that is the way to bring an end to the backstop – by agreeing our new relationship.

The EU's position was that – while they never want or expect the backstop to come into force – a legal time limit was not possible.

But while we did not achieve that, we have secured valuable new clarifications and assurances to put before the House of Commons, including on getting our future relationship in place rapidly, so that the backstop

should never need to be used.

We now have a commitment from the EU that work on our new relationship can begin as soon as possible after the signing of the Withdrawal Agreement – in advance of the 29 March – and we have an explicit commitment that this new relationship does not need to replicate the backstop in any respect whatsoever.

We have agreement on a fast-track process to bring the free trade deal we will negotiate into force if there are any delays in member states ratifying it, making it even more likely that the backstop will never need to be used.

We now have absolute clarity on the explicit linkage between the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration, putting beyond doubt that these come as a package.

And finally the EU have confirmed their acceptance that the UK can unilaterally deliver on all the commitments made in our Northern Ireland paper last week, including a Stormont lock on new EU laws being added to the backstop, and a seat at the table for a restored Northern Ireland Executive.

The legal standing of the significant conclusions of the December Council have been confirmed. If the backstop were ever triggered it would only be temporary and both sides would do all they could to bring it to an end as quickly as possible.

The letters published today have legal force and must be used to interpret the meaning of the Withdrawal Agreement, including in any future arbitration.

They make absolutely clear the backstop is not a threat or a trap.

I fully understand that the new legal and political assurances which are contained in the letters from Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker do not go as far as some MPs would like.

But I am convinced that MPs now have the clearest assurances that this is the best deal possible and that it is worthy of their support.

Two other areas of concern raised and reflected in amendments tabled to the meaningful vote were on the protection of workers' rights and on environmental standards.

I could not have been clearer that far from wanting to see a reduction in our standards in these areas, the UK will instead continue to be a world leader.

We have committed to addressing these concerns and will work with MPs from across the House on how best to implement them, looking at legislation where necessary, to deliver the best possible results for workers across the UK.

This afternoon I will set out in greater detail to MPs what is contained in the correspondence I have published today and what it means for our withdrawal.

And tomorrow I will close the debate.

But as we start this crucial week in our country's history let's take a step back and remember both what is at stake and what we stand to gain by coming together behind this agreement.

Settle the question of our withdrawal and we can move on to forging our new relationship.

Back the deal tomorrow, and that work can start on Wednesday.

Fail and we face the risk of leaving without a deal, or the even bigger risk of not leaving at all.

I think the British people are ready for us to move on.

To move beyond division and come together.

To move beyond uncertainty into a brighter future.

That is the chance that MPs of all parties will have tomorrow night.

And for our country's sake, I urge them to take it.

Thank you.

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## News story: Improving wifi in our criminal courts

Good and reliable wifi is important in our courts and tribunals to ensure court visitors and legal professionals can work effectively in our buildings. We currently see over 46,000 active users a week using our wifi networks, 30,000 in criminal courts and 16,000 in civil and family courts and tribunals, exchanging 66TB of data, equivalent to over 29 million typewritten pages, over 106,000 CDs or over 14,000 DVDs. That is why we have started work to put the infrastructure in place to deliver better wifi in our criminal courts.

Our new full-building GovWifi allows more people to use the enhanced wifi network from a single logon – meaning easier access to online systems, less paper and improved ways of working for people who need to work out of multiple courts.

Wifi is already available in all courts and tribunals. All civil and family courts and tribunals have already got enhanced full-building wifi coverage. We are currently six months into a three-year programme to deliver faster wifi in all criminal courts by 2021. This new full-building wifi network will be

in addition to the existing PCU wifi network already available in courts and tribunals.

Feedback has been positive and the earlier than previously planned roll-out of GovWifi to all courts, even where wifi has not yet been upgraded to full-building coverage, has already benefited local authority advocates, youth offender teams, presenting officers, UK visas and immigration in the Home Office, CAFCASS, and legal professionals visiting our court and tribunal buildings. We recognise that where wifi has not yet been upgraded, the bandwidth is not yet sufficient for downloading large case files and video clips but this will be improved as the infrastructure programme is delivered.

The following list shows where we now have full building coverage, improved bandwidth, and a resilient design in 31 criminal courts. We have prioritised Crown and Combined courts:

- Birmingham Crown Court
- Bradford Law Courts – Crown
- Bristol Crown Court
- Cardiff Crown Court
- Chelmsford Crown Court
- Coventry Combined Court
- Croydon Crown Court
- Derby Combined Court
- Inner London Sessions House Crown Court
- Isleworth Crown Court
- Kingston upon Thames Crown Court
- Leeds Combined Court
- Leicester Crown Court
- Lewes Combined Court
- Liverpool Crown Court
- Luton Crown Court
- Maidstone Combined Court
- Manchester Crown Court – Crown Square
- Newcastle Combined Court
- Norwich Combined Court
- Portsmouth Combined Court
- Preston Combined Court
- Reading Crown Court
- Salisbury Combined Court
- Sheffield Crown Court
- Snaresbrook Crown Court
- Southwark Crown Court
- Teesside Combined Court
- Wood Green Crown Court
- Woolwich Crown Court
- Wolverhampton Combined Court

Court visitors and professional users can text “GO” to 07537 417417 to set up a GovWifi account. Once an account has been set up it can be used at any GovWifi-enabled location. If a location you are visiting is using GovWifi it will appear as an available network to connect to on your device, and if your

device is set up to connect automatically it will do so.

Advice to legal professionals is to connect to the wifi ahead of going into court.

If you have problems setting up the GovWifi account or connecting to the network please contact the helpdesk on 0845 600 6909.

This upgrade is another important step in the ongoing modernisation of the courts and tribunals system as part of the reform programme, bringing new technology and modern ways of working to the justice system.

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## **News story: Improving wifi in our criminal courts**

We are rolling out more reliable wifi across our criminal courts.

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## **News story: VMD web and telephone services will be unavailable from 01:00, 19 January to 08:00, 21 January**

The following online application services will be unavailable:

[Special Import Certificates](#)

[Special Treatment Certificates](#)

You should obtain an import certificate in advance if you think you will need to import/use an imported medicine during this period. In urgent cases you may purchase and use an imported veterinary medicine prior to obtaining a certificate from the VMD. This is a special dispensation which only applies to the VMD online system during this maintenance period. You should obtain an import certificate retrospectively as soon as possible.

[Research Import Certificates](#)

[Export Certificates](#)

[Microchip Adverse Event Reporting](#)



[Animal Adverse Reaction Reporting](#)

[Human Adverse Reaction Reporting](#)

The following online information service will be unavailable:

[Product Information Database](#)

Also, we will not be able to receive phone calls through the switchboard or via direct dial.

The systems should be operational again from 8:00 Monday 21 January.

The VMD apologises for any inconvenience.

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## **Speech: Townhall meeting for British nationals – opening remarks**

Hello everyone. For those who haven't met me, my name is Iain Lindsay and I am the British Ambassador to Hungary. Thank you for coming this evening.

Grateful to Szabolcs Takács, State Secretary for European Union Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, for representing the Hungarian Government.

Hungary is home to 5-10,000 Brits, therefore it is important for us to give you an opportunity to hear the latest information on EU Exit, both from the UK and the Hungarian Governments. And even more importantly, it's important that we listen to your thoughts and concerns.

Before I launch into the main part of my comments this evening, I want to flag up three things:

I'd like to encourage you to regularly check our embassy's website on [GOV.UK](#), including our [Living in Hungary guide](#) guide and follow our social media channels, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), to have the most up-to-date information about our departure from the EU.

You will find little cards on your seats with all the relevant links, including a link to a [survey](#) where we would welcome your feedback on this event.

Many of those who cannot be here today have asked that we live stream this event so that information is shared as widely as possible. I am pleased to confirm that we are doing this, so please note that recording will take place throughout the event. We will also publish a summary of this event on our website, so that you can return to any of the questions we discuss today.

Finally, about the format of the event: following my comments I will ask State Secretary Takács to say a few words on behalf of the Hungarian Government. Then we will open the floor for questions.

I know that the EU referendum decision has caused considerable uncertainty, and in many cases disappointment, for you. These are difficult times but we have worked hard with our EU partners to reach agreement on the Withdrawal Agreement and a Political Declaration.

From the very beginning of this process, Prime Minister Theresa May has said that safeguarding the rights of UK nationals living in the EU and EU citizens living in the UK was her top priority.

This evening, I would like to give you an update on the agreement reached on citizens' rights. I will also speak about your situation should we not be able to reach an overall agreement with the EU, which I want to stress is neither our, nor the EU's, wish or intention.

## **Withdrawal Agreement**

The Withdrawal Agreement will ensure our smooth and orderly exit from the UK, including securing the rights of the 1 million+ UK nationals in the EU and 3 million+ EU citizens in the UK. The European Council endorsed this Agreement in November. Our Parliament was due to vote on the agreement in December, but the PM decided to postpone that vote until January. That vote is now due on 15 January.

I know this is a period of uncertainty and I appreciate it's very difficult for you – it is for us all. As a responsible government we are preparing for all potential scenarios. I will speak about this later.

If Parliament votes in favour of the Withdrawal Agreement, it will be implemented by the end of March and the result will be:

- a time-limited implementation period, lasting from when we exit the EU until 31 December 2020. During the implementation period, EU law will continue to apply to the UK. As such, during that period UK nationals will continue to be able to travel, work and live freely in any member state, as is currently the case

UK nationals already living legally in Hungary will be able to remain on broadly the same basis after the UK leaves the EU. That means if a UK national is legally residing in Hungary by 31 December 2020, they will be able to continue doing so afterwards. And not only to reside, but to continue working, studying, being retired, or whatever they were doing before. This means:

- you will have the right to “family reunification” – that is bringing your family members to Hungary, which I know is really important to many of you. So if you are resident in Hungary, you will be able to bring your family members to Hungary even after our exit from the EU. This applies to children, including those born after exit day, dependant

parents and dependant grandparents. It also covers partners, including spouses, registered partners, and partners >in a proven long-term relationship, where the relationship existed before 31 December 2020

The UK and the EU will continue to aggregate social security contributions made both before and after the end of the implementation period. Those who have paid into a system – for example pensions – and may pay in in the future, will have their contributions protected.

In addition, we will continue to pay an uprated UK State Pension to individuals resident in EU Member States, and, in accordance with EU rules, provide associated healthcare cover in the EU.

The UK and EU will also protect the right to export relevant benefits (e.g. child benefit and disability benefits) to both EU Member States and the UK, as under the current EU rules.

Current healthcare arrangements will continue for those citizens who are legally resident in Hungary by 31 December 2020, including the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), planned treatments and health care reimbursement arrangements for pensioners (the S1 route).

You will also retain your right to run or establish a business in Hungary.

All of these provisions will apply equally to Hungarian citizens in the UK.

So what is not included in the Withdrawal Agreement? There are some issues we haven't yet been able to agree on with the EU, which we hope to discuss in the next round. For example, I know that the right to continue to have the ability to move freely around all 27 remaining EU27 countries is important to many of you. We will seek to discuss this in the context of our future partnership.

## **No deal**

Up to now we have been talking about the situation in the event that the British Parliament approves the deal we have negotiated. I am however conscious that many of you will be aware that Parliament may not approve the deal, and that it is possible that the UK may leave the EU without a deal.

Delivering the deal negotiated with the EU remains the Government's top priority. This has not changed. However, the Government must prepare for every eventuality, including a no deal scenario. With less than three months until our exit from the EU, we have reached the point where we need to accelerate and intensify these preparations.

The Government has now published 106 pieces of advice on different subjects to help businesses, citizens and consumers to prepare for 29 March in the event of a no-deal scenario. These are available on the government website. They are called "technical notices". Those dealing with passports and driving licences might be of particular interest to people here.

Our objective in a no-deal scenario is to minimise disruption by taking unilateral action to prioritise continuity and stability. Stability in a no-deal scenario partly depends on the EU taking a similar, non-disruptive approach to planning.

You may be aware that on 21 September, the Prime Minister confirmed that in the event of no-deal, all EU citizens resident in the UK before 29 March 2019 would be able to stay. And we are asking Member States to respond to the guarantees we have given to EU citizens and confirm that UK nationals can stay, even in a 'no deal' scenario too. I am very pleased to say Hungary has already done that, about which I am sure State Secretary Takács will wish to say more.

I appreciate this is a period of uncertainty and many of you want more information and advice. We want to help you prepare for all scenarios and are committed to ensuring relevant information is available in a timely, transparent and accessible way. Further information will continue to be made available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) over the coming weeks.

If you only take one thing away with you today, it should be to have your affairs in order. If you haven't already done so, register with the Hungarian authorities. Any deal will only apply to those who are lawfully resident in Hungary, which means you have to be registered if you have been residing in Hungary for 3 months. This is a long-standing requirement.

In order to register, you have to submit your application to the relevant regional directorate of the Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office by presenting a valid travel document or personal identification document alongside with the documents that prove you have the right to residence, e.g. in case of employment the relevant documentary evidence provided by your employer. The application fee is HUF 1,000. You will find further information in English on the website of the [Immigration and Asylum Office](#).

I'd also like to encourage you again to follow our embassy Facebook and Twitter pages. Both accounts are called 'UK in Hungary', and should be easy to find. But details of all of these are on the cards on your seats.

We're constantly working to improve these events. Therefore, we would really appreciate your feedback. We will share the link to the online feedback form on our social media channels.

Finally, we understand that this is a difficult time for many people, but we continue to work together with the Hungarian Government to ensure that you are able to continue to live your lives as you have done to date, and that you have the best information possible.

Thank you very much for your attention, let me now give the floor to State Secretary Takács.