

Brexit announcement: Caroline Lucas full speech



2 May 2017

Caroline Lucas today (May 2) gave voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge.

Caroline Lucas' full speech (check against delivery):

This General Election potentially changes everything.

We are at a crossroads – and the choices we make in the coming weeks will have huge consequences for the kind of country we're going to be in the future.

And the biggest choice we face is clearly about Brexit.

Though my party fought hard for Britain to stay in the EU, and I voted against an unconditional triggering of Article 50, we accept, of course, that the referendum was an instruction to the Government to begin Brexit negotiations.

We do not accept, however, that the decision should be irreversible.

The referendum should be the start, not the end, of the democratic process.

And it's therefore right that people should have the right to a say on the final deal in a ratification referendum – with the option to remain in the EU if they so choose.

There are those who will say that this is contrary to the 'will of the people'.

But the claim that the referendum produced an irreversible verdict is a sham.

At a General Election, voters obviously have the right to revisit the choice

of government that they made at a previous election.

It would be ludicrous to suggest people couldn't change their minds about which way to vote, as facts change, and experience becomes clearer.

And in the same way, it gives them the right to revisit a referendum result, as long as the parties are clear about the options on the table.

Whoever forms a Government after June 8 will have a mandate to negotiate with the EU on our behalf.

But we live in a democracy and it would be deeply undemocratic to impose the terms of any deal on Britain's citizens, on our communities, young people, and businesses.

So let's give people honest choices.

Let's be clear that there is a wealth of difference between a soft Brexit, with membership of the Single Market, and an extreme Brexit – the one our Prime Minister is hell bent on pursuing, where we're out of the single market, out of the Customs Union, ending free movement, and with our key social and environmental protections at risk.

The day following the EU referendum the Green Party called for the British people to have a further say on the *details* of any Brexit deal.

We stand by that position and today we pledge to voters to go further.

Our election manifesto will not only include a ratification referendum, it will also explicitly make the option to remain in the EU part of such a ratification referendum.

Greens proudly and passionately campaigned to remain in the EU.

And, unlike some, we've not changed our deeply held belief that we are better off in the EU.

The Green Party is united behind a bold vision for a fairer, greener, bigger future which has co-operation at its heart.

From tackling climate change to preventing terrorism, the challenges of our times require us to work with our neighbours to find solutions.

Not cast ourselves adrift.

Still less fashion ourselves as a bargain basement tax haven drifting off the continent, as Theresa May has threatened.

And while we've all learned to treat polls with extreme caution, it might just turn out to be significant that last week's Yougov poll showed, for the first time, a majority of British people now oppose Brexit.

And maybe that's because the costs of Brexit are becoming clearer.

Inflation is already rising as imported goods rise in price.

Real wages are stagnating, investment is on hold.

All these indicators will be worse by 2020 when the election was meant to take place.

The referendum outcome last June was never supposed to be the final word. It was the beginning of a conversation.

And this General Election is a chance to reflect on what we have learned since then...

That Brexit is being used by the Tories to drive through an ideological agenda that champions deregulation and privatisation on an unprecedented scale

That people were lied to.

That there is no £350 million each week for the NHS.

That the PM has *no intention* of seeking to enable us to remain members of the Single Market.

That immigration is unlikely to be controlled because, as David Davis has himself acknowledged, it's necessary for our economy

And indeed it's become clearer than ever that immigration is not to blame for the lack of social housing, GP appointments or local jobs – government spending cuts are.

What's also become clear is that the official opposition has been no serious opposition at all.

The Labour Party haven't only given the Tories a blank cheque for a hard Brexit.

They've given them a lift to the bank and helped them cash it in.

If Labour had made the case for staying in the Single Market, they could have made common cause with other opposition parties, and together we could have had a chance to avoid this most extreme of Brexits.

That was a tragically missed opportunity.

Meanwhile their unconditional support for triggering Article 50 meant that the opportunity to secure some key safeguards was squandered

Why would the Government listen to calls for an immediate guarantee for EU nationals living in the UK, or for a meaningful parliamentary vote, if the opposition had already made clear its intention to support Article 50 in any and all circumstances?

The General Election makes a different bigger future possible and it's

crucial that voters are not lied to again.

Brexit is not inevitable.

The triggering of Article 50 is not irreversible.

And we still believe we are better off as members of the EU.

Greens see the bigger picture and we stand up for matters.

Not based on political expediency but based on principle and evidence.

The Conservatives could have sought to unite the country by bringing leavers and remainers together.

Instead they chose to sow more discord and division – they cannot be trusted.

The environment matters. Nobody voted to scrap environmental protections on June 23 yet leaving the EU places out local, national and global environments in jeopardy.

Climate change is the greatest challenge our world faces and co-operating with our EU neighbours to take collective action is how we rise to that challenge.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because the environment matters.

Our pledge is about standing up for young people too. For the generations that have most to lose if we cut ourselves loose from the EU.

Greens want young people to have big opportunities and a big future.

And that means the right to study, travel, work, live and love across the EU.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because young people matter.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because a resilient, diverse economy matters.

And it's a vote for the certainty that we will stick to our principles and use the negotiation period triggered by article 50 to fight for a deal that puts social and environmental justice first.

If the Government is so convinced that they'll get a decent deal then there's no reason that they wouldn't trust people to have a final say.

If the Government believes it's own rhetoric about the will of the people they'll respect that electorates are free to change their minds.

This General Election changes everything and the choices we all make matter like never before.

Our message is simple and unambiguous.

The Greens are the only political party to unequivocally pledge to give voters the chance to keep EU membership.

For a final say, and for a chance to vote to stay in the EU, vote Green.

Greens give voters chance to stay in EU

*** Greens reveal new pledge giving voters ratification referendum with option to keep EU membership**

*** Caroline Lucas: "A democracy worthy of the name must mean people having a real say"**

*** Event: 10.30am, The Space Studios, 129-131 Mare Street, London, E8 3RH**

Caroline Lucas will offer voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge at an event tomorrow morning (Tuesday 2 May).

Lucas, Green Party co-leader, will pledge to give voters a final say on any Brexit deal – with the chance to stay in the EU if they don't like the deal the Government negotiates.

Speaking to workers and activists at Space Studios in London, an art studio which has benefitted from EU funding, Lucas is expected to say:

"A democracy worthy of the name must mean people having a real say over the major decisions that affect their lives. That's why the Green Party has consistently said that the referendum should be the start, not the end, of the democratic process. And it's why today we are announcing our intention to push for remaining in the EU to be an option in a ratification referendum."

The Greens are the only party to have made an official and unambiguous pledge to include the option of remaining in the EU on the ballot paper of a ratification referendum.

Lucas is expected to say:

"Whoever wins this election has a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the British people – but that does not mean that they have a right to impose a final deal. Instead we demand a ratification referendum which gives people the option to remain in the EU if they wish, or to vote back the Government's deal.

"There are some who say that this is a re-run of the referendum, but that simply isn't the case. Instead this is giving people an informed say over our shared future. If the Government is so convinced that they'll get a decent deal then there's no reason that they wouldn't trust people to have a final say.

"Our message is simple. For a final say, and for a chance to vote to stay in

the EU, vote Green.”

Lucas will be joined by Molly Scott Cato, the Green Party’s EU spokesperson who is gearing up to take the Bristol West seat from Labour and join Lucas in Parliament.

Scott Cato, Green Party EU spokesperson and Bristol West candidate, is expected to say:

“Take back control was the strap line which persuaded many to vote Leave in the referendum last year. It’s now clear what that meant. A power grab by the Tory right so they can make a bonfire of regulations which protect our rights and environment. A ratification referendum must give back control. People must be given an opportunity to vote for the future on offer at the end of the article 50 process, or decide whether actually we are better off remaining a full member of the EU.”

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