

Speech: PM statement to the House of Commons: 29 January 2019

On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

A fortnight ago, this House clearly rejected the proposed Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration with just 202 Members voting in favour.

Tonight a majority of Honourable Members have said they would support 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, in law where need be, it is now clear that there is a route that can secure a substantial and sustainable majority in this House for leaving the EU with a deal.

We 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. My colleagues and I will talk to the EU about how we address the House's views.

As I said this afternoon, there is limited appetite for such a change in the EU and negotiating it will not be easy. But in contrast to a fortnight ago, this House has made it clear what it needs to approve a Withdrawal Agreement.

Many Honourable Members have said that the continuing protection of workers' rights after Brexit is something that needs to be strengthened, and my Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business will intensify our work with Honourable Members from across the House and the trade unions this week.

And my Right Honourable friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union will do the same on how we engage this House further in our approach to negotiating our future partnership with the EU.

As well as making clear what changes it needs to approve the Withdrawal agreement, the House has also reconfirmed its view that it does not want to leave the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement and Future Framework.

I agree that we should not leave without a deal. However, simply opposing no deal is not enough to stop it.

The Government will now redouble its efforts to get a deal that this House can support and to that end I want to invite my Right Honourable Friend the Member for Meriden, the Honourable Member for Birmingham Erdington, and all those that tabled amendments in opposition to No Deal to discuss how we can deliver that by securing a deal.

In light of the defeat of the Right Honourable Member the Leader of the Opposition's amendment I again invite him to take up my offer of the meeting to see if we can find a way forward.

Mr Speaker, if this House can come together we can deliver the decision the British people took in June 2016, restore faith in our democracy and get on with building a country that works for everyone.

And as Prime Minister I will work with Members across this House to do just that.

News story: Boost for national mission to improve early literacy and language

Parents who lack confidence with supporting their young children's early learning at home will benefit from projects being pledged by businesses around the country.

These will range from bookswaps in supermarkets and author ambassadors, to special training for staff in shoe shops.

Oxford University Press and HarperCollins are among businesses joining a roundtable discussion chaired by Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi today (29 November), adding to almost 100 businesses, charities and public sector organisations who coming together to tackle the 'last taboo' in education, the home learning environment.

There are hundreds of educational apps on the market for parents to choose from when supporting their children's learning using mobile phones or tablets, but little advice about their quality. To help tackle this, the Department for Education will bring together a new advisory panel to assess existing apps, producing tips and guidance for parents on how to use them to aid their child's learning, and to help them make informed decisions about which have the most educational value.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want to create a generation of confident learners who can read and communicate effectively – these are vital skills that children need to grasp from the earliest opportunity in order to succeed.

There's no instruction manual for being a parent. For some who left school a long time ago or who have low confidence in their own abilities, it can be overwhelming to know where to start with supporting children's learning at home before they start school – and we know that too many children are arriving at school already behind their peers.

By working with a growing number of businesses, charities and

experts, we're making it easier for parents to kickstart this early development – helping to take forward our national mission to boost children's early development. New projects are being set up all over the country and our expert panel will create trusted tools that parents can be confident using, so that every child develops the skills they need to thrive.

Representatives from eight organisations including the Lego Group, Clarks, EasyPeasy, HarperCollins, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), British Land, Oxford University Press and KPMG attended the roundtable, led by the National Literacy Trust's Chief Executive Jonathan Douglas, the next step in the Government's campaign to tackle concerning rates of early literacy and communication among disadvantaged families.

It builds on the Education Secretary Damian Hinds' [ambition](#) set out in July last year to halve the proportion of five-year-olds not meeting expected standards in these skills by the time they finish Reception.

The nine businesses join others already involved in work to support parents with improving the home learning environment. These include Addo Foods and HarperCollins, whose projects in this area will range from upskilling their own staff to improve their interaction with disadvantaged families, to providing tools and resources that encourage parents to incorporate reading and communication in everyday activities.

Pledges from businesses already signed up include:

- Clarks – where its 6,500 staff will be trained in children's speech, language and communication development and how to engage with families in stores across the country;
- HarperCollins – driving a love of reading through author ambassadors, book donations and grants for independent bookshops to support events targeted at children under five and their parents;
- Addo Foods – supporting its employees with children aged 0 to five to use its language lab facilities at its Nottingham headquarters to encourage improved communication skills;
- WHSmiths – supporting literacy programmes in Swindon, where there are high levels of illiteracy, including bringing parents into nurseries to help advise on how to support their child's literacy and language development; and
- British Land and Penguin Random House – working together to provide high-quality children's books for bookswap schemes launching in three British Land retail sites, building on British Land's work to reach more than 34,000 primary school children to improve their literacy.

Analysis from the National Literacy Trust suggests that 7.1 million adults in the UK have very poor literacy skills, so pledges focused on improving the training available to adult employees, particularly those who are parents, will play a key role in boosting literacy and language skills among young children.

Professor Jackie Marsh, Chair of the advisory panel, said:

I am delighted to take on the role of Chair of the panel on early years, language, literacy and communication apps. Young children are immersed in a digital world from their earliest years and have access to many apps on tablets and smartphones.

There is a need to identify the features of high quality apps that support their learning and to offer parents, carers and teachers guidance on how to select and use apps effectively. The government has rightly identified this as a priority and I look forward to working with the members of the panel on undertaking this important task.

Further information

The new advisory panel will consist of:

- Professor Jackie Marsh, Chair: Professor of Education at the University of Sheffield and a leading figure in children's digital literacy;
 - Olivia Dickinson, Deputy Chair: Digital consultant specialising in children's and educational digital media, with experience working for Nickelodeon, BBC, Discovery Education, Sky Kids and Amazon;
 - Peter Robinson: Global Head of Research and Company Director of Dubit Limited, specialising in digital entertainment and education for children;
 - Antonio Gould: Executive Director of Teach Monster Games, a not-for-profit education technology company responsible for the 'Teach Your Monster To Read' app, boasting a monthly reach of more than one million children;
 - Dr Rosie Flewitt: Co-Head of Research, Department of Learning and Leadership at UCL Institute of Education and Co-Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy, with 20 years' experience in early communication, literacy and language research;
 - Sandra Mathers: a former primary teacher and now Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford, with expertise in child learning and development, including the ways in which this can be supported through technology;
 - Jonathan Douglas: Director of the National Literacy Trust, responsible for the Trust's 'Literacy Apps' resource for parents and teachers, and a key advocate of the Government's work to improve the Home Learning Environment; and
 - Jane Lewis: Head of Programme Development and Quality at Save the Children UK. She is responsible for programme development and innovation, focused on the home learning environment and supporting parents' engagement in their children's early education.
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[News story: Foreign Secretary concerned by report on media freedoms in China](#)



Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt said:

I am concerned by the findings in the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China report about media freedoms and the deteriorating situation for journalists in China.

Its publication coincides with the sentencing of journalist Liu Feiyue, one of over 60 journalists currently detained in China.

The UK is also concerned about the sentencing of Wang Quanzhang, a lawyer whose case I raised with Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi last July. He has spent the last three and a half years in pre-trial detention, much of that time incommunicado.

We urge the Chinese government to ensure fundamental civil and political rights are protected, in line with China's constitution and its international commitments.

Further information

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[Press release: New government guidance](#)

encourages pesticides industry to prepare for EU exit

The Government has today (29 January) issued guidance to manufacturers and users of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) on what action they need to take now to minimise any disruption once the UK leaves the EU.

The high scientific standard to which decisions on the use of pesticides are made will not change. We will continue to be guided by the most up-to-date scientific assessment of the risks to animals and the environment.

If the UK leaves the EU on 29 March without a deal, pesticides currently available in the UK at the point of exit will continue to be so, allowing products to be marketed and used as normal.

Future PPP applications for use and renewals in the UK will continue to be considered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), on behalf of the UK Government (Defra) and the devolved administrations. The format and data requirements for new applications will remain the same as they do now, minimising disruption for businesses.

The key change would be that if a business wishes to place a new pesticide on the EU market they will need to make a separate application to the EU, a process which could take up to three years.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

Delivering a negotiated deal with the EU remains the Government's top priority, but it is our job to responsibly ensure we are prepared for all scenarios, including no deal.

Whether the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal will not change the high scientific standard to which decisions on the use of pesticides are made. We will continue to be guided by the most up to date scientific assessment of the risks to people, animals and the environment.

If the UK leaves the EU with a deal there will be an Implementation Period (IP) during which the UK will continue to follow decisions made by the EU on pesticide approvals and Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs).

The key difference for businesses is that, during the IP, the UK will not be able to act as a 'leading authority' under the EU regime and the HSE will be unable to conduct active substance or MRL evaluations. Therefore businesses wishing to supply new pesticides to the UK and/or EU markets would need to make an application to a competent authority in an EU Member State.

Businesses that may be affected by either scenarios should read the [latest](#)

News story: HMRC hosts event for businesses who export and import with the EU

The event outlined the changes businesses will need to respond to, as they import and export with EU companies, under a range of scenarios.

[Mel Stride](#) said:

This is part of the vital preparation to ensure that businesses are ready for leaving the EU.

Opportunities abound for a global Britain to strike out for rich new fields of trade and investment – however, preparations are needed to be able to capitalise on them.

HMRC is doing everything it can to make clear to businesses what is required of them ahead of when we leave.

In recent months, HMRC has published technical notices, partner packs, letters and guidance setting out the implications for a no deal scenario.

There is a real need for businesses trading to be ready and able to comply with any new rules and be emboldened to continue trading confidently.

The event, held at the QEII Centre in central London, heard from speakers who updated businesses with the latest information and actions to take around customs, VAT and excise, specifically including:

- customs processes
- roll-on roll-off port locations and changes
- VAT processes

The event also hosted information stalls for the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Border Delivery Group, Department for Transport, Government Digital Service and the Home Office.

Businesses will also receive a letter in early February with further details and information with guidance published on GOV.UK.