

# Speech: PM's statement on exiting the European Union: 10 December 2018

Mr Speaker, with permission I would like to make a statement on Exiting the European Union.

We have now had three days of debate on the Withdrawal Agreement setting out the terms of our departure from the EU and the Political Declaration setting out our future relationship after we have left.

I have listened very carefully to what has been said, in this chamber and out of it, by members from all sides.

From listening to those views it is clear that while there is broad support for many of the key aspects of the deal, on one issue – the Northern Ireland backstop – there remains widespread and deep concern.

As a result, if we went ahead and held the vote tomorrow the deal would be rejected by a significant margin.

We will therefore defer the vote scheduled for tomorrow and not proceed to divide the House at this time.

I set out in my speech opening the debate last week the reasons why the backstop is a necessary guarantee to the people of Northern Ireland and why – whatever future relationship you want – there is no deal available that does not include the backstop.

Behind all those arguments are some inescapable facts.

The fact that Northern Ireland shares a land border with another sovereign state.

The fact that the hard-won peace that has been built in Northern Ireland over the last two decades has been built around a seamless border.

And the fact that Brexit will create a wholly new situation: on 30 March the Northern Ireland/Ireland border will for the first time become the external frontier of the European Union's single market and customs union.

The challenge this poses must be met not with rhetoric but with real and workable solutions.

Businesses operate across that border. People live their lives crossing and re-crossing it every day.

I have been there and spoken to some of those people. They do not want their everyday lives to change as a result of the decision we have taken. They do not want a return to a hard border.

And if this House cares about preserving our Union, it must listen to those people, because our Union will only endure with their consent.

We had hoped that the changes we have secured to the backstop would reassure Members that we could never be trapped in it indefinitely.

I hope the House will forgive me if I take a moment to remind it of those changes.

The customs element of the backstop is now UK-wide. It no longer splits our country into two customs territories. This also means that the backstop is now an uncomfortable arrangement for the EU, so they won't want it to come into use, or persist for long if it does.

Both sides are now legally committed to using best endeavours to have our new relationship in place before the end of the implementation period, ensuring the backstop is never used.

If our new relationship isn't ready, we can now choose to extend the implementation period, further reducing the likelihood of the backstop coming into use.

If the backstop ever does come into use, we now don't have to get the new relationship in place to get out of it. Alternative arrangements that make use of technology could be put in place instead.

The treaty is now clear that the backstop can only ever be temporary.

And there is now a termination clause.

But I am clear from what I have heard in this place and from my own conversations that these elements do not offer a sufficient number of colleagues the reassurance that they need.

I spoke to a number of EU leaders over the weekend, and in advance of the European Council I will go to see my counterparts in other member states and the leadership of the Council and the Commission.

I will discuss with them the clear concerns that this House has expressed.

We are also looking closely at new ways of empowering the House of Commons to ensure that any provision for a backstop has democratic legitimacy and to enable the House to place its own obligations on the government to ensure that the backstop cannot be in place indefinitely.

Mr Speaker, having spent the best part of two years poring over the detail of Brexit, listening to the public's ambitions, and yes, their fears too, and testing the limits of what the other side is prepared to accept, I am in absolutely no doubt that this deal is the right one.

It honours the result of the referendum. It protects jobs, security and our Union. But it also represents the very best deal that is actually negotiable with the EU.

I believe in it – as do many Members of this House. And I still believe there is a majority to be won in this House in support of it, if I can secure additional reassurance on the question of the backstop.

And that is what my focus will be in the days ahead.

But Mr Speaker, if you take a step back, it is clear that this House faces a much more fundamental question.

Does this House want to deliver Brexit? And if it does, does it want to do so through reaching an agreement with the EU?

If the answer is yes, and I believe that is the answer of the majority of this House, then we all have to ask ourselves whether we are prepared to make a compromise.

Because there will be no enduring and successful Brexit without some compromise on both sides of the debate.

Many of the most controversial aspects of this deal – including the backstop – are simply inescapable facts of having a negotiated Brexit.

Those members who continue to disagree need to shoulder the responsibility of advocating an alternative solution that can be delivered.

And do so without ducking its implications.

So if you want a second referendum to overturn the result of the first, be honest that this risks dividing the country again, when as a House we should be striving to bring it back together.

If you want to remain part of the Single Market and the Customs Union, be open that this would require free movement, rule-taking across the economy, and ongoing financial contributions – none of which are in my view compatible with the result of the referendum.

If you want to leave without a deal, be upfront that in the short term, this would cause significant economic damage to parts of our country who can least afford to bear the burden.

I do not believe that any of those courses of action command a majority in this House.

But notwithstanding that fact, for as long as we fail to agree a deal, the risk of an accidental no deal increases.

So the government will step up its work in preparation for that potential outcome and the Cabinet will hold further discussions on it this week.

The vast majority of us, Mr Speaker, accept the result of the referendum, and want to leave with a deal. We have a responsibility to discharge.

If we will the ends, we must also will the means.

I know that members across the House appreciate how important that responsibility is.

And I am very grateful to all members – on this side of the House and a few on the other side too – who have backed this deal and spoken up for it.

Many others, I know, have been wrestling with their consciences, particularly over the question of the backstop: seized of the need to face-up to the challenge posed by the Irish border, but genuinely concerned about the consequences.

I have listened. I have heard those concerns and I will now do everything I possibly can to secure further assurances.

If I may conclude on a personal note, Mr Speaker.

On the morning after the referendum two and a half years ago, I knew that we had witnessed a defining moment for our democracy.

Places that didn't get a lot of attention at elections and which did not get much coverage on the news were making their voices heard and saying that they wanted things to change.

I knew in that moment that Parliament had to deliver for them.

But of course that does not just mean delivering Brexit. It means working across all areas – building a stronger economy, improving public services, tackling social injustices – to make this a country that truly works for everyone, a country where nowhere and nobody is left behind.

And these matters are too important to be afterthoughts in our politics – they deserve to be at the centre of our thinking.

But that can only happen if we get Brexit done and get it done right.

And even though I voted Remain, from the moment I took up the responsibility of being Prime Minister of this great country I have known that my duty is to honour the result of that vote.

And I have been just as determined to protect the jobs that put food on the tables of working families and the security partnerships that keep each one of us safe.

And that is what this deal does. It gives us control of our borders, our money and our laws. It protects jobs, security and our Union. It is the right deal for Britain.

I am determined to do all I can to secure the reassurances this House requires, to get this deal over the line and deliver for the British people.

And I commend this statement to the House.

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## News story: Veterinary Medicine Supply Problem: Isoflurane



The VMD has received confirmation that UK authorised isoflurane-containing veterinary products will be available in February.

For details of the supply situation for individual UK authorised products, please contact the relevant Marketing Authorisation Holder.

Information on authorised isoflurane-containing products is available on the VMD's [Product Information Database](#)

While there are supply issues with some isoflurane-containing products, vets may use alternative products under the Cascade.

Vets should make every effort to first obtain a UK authorised product, before using a product under the Cascade.

The steps in the cascade are, in descending order of suitability:

- a veterinary medicine authorised in the UK for use in another animal species, or for a different condition in the same species

If there is no such product available, either:

- a medicine authorised in the UK for human use, or
- a veterinary medicine not authorised in the UK, but authorised in another member state for use in any animal species in accordance with the [Special Import Scheme](#) (in the case of a food-producing animal the medicine must be authorised for a food producing species)

If there is no such product available:

- a medicine prescribed by the vet responsible for treating the animal and prepared especially on this occasion (known as an extemporaneous preparation or special) by a vet, a pharmacist or a person holding an appropriate manufacturer's authorisation (specials manufacturers)

- in exceptional circumstances, medicines may be imported from outside Europe via the Special Import Scheme

Vets' use of the cascade must be based on clinical need, and not cost nor convenience. Where authorised products are temporarily unavailable vets should consider the likely quantities needed and purchase appropriately.

As soon as an authorised product is available, vets must use this even if they still have stocks of unauthorised isoflurane-containing products.

VMD inspectors will be reviewing the use of isoflurane products as part of Veterinary Practice Premises inspections, to ensure that the cascade has been followed.

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Last updated 11 February 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 11 February 2019 Updated 11 February 2019
2. 14 January 2019 Updated with additional available products.
3. 21 December 2018 A further 4 products added to the imports list
4. 18 December 2018 Updated advice
5. 14 December 2018 Update 14 December to include products available for import under the Special Import Scheme
6. 14 December 2018 Update 14 December: Products available for import through VMD's Special Import Scheme
7. 10 December 2018 First published.

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## [Press release: UKEF and VAMED agree framework to boost UK healthcare exports](#)

Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, welcomed the agreement:

VAMED is a global leader in healthcare, providing hospitals and medical facilities that are improving the lives of people in more than 80 countries around the world.

The Export Strategy, and our newly launched second Life Sciences Sector Deal, set out our ambition to connect more UK businesses with international opportunities, and I am delighted that UK Export Finance and the Department for International Trade are working with VAMED to increase healthcare exports.

# Growing the export supply chain and UK operations

The agreement sets out plans for UKEF, the UK's export credit agency, the Department for International Trade and VAMED Engineering to work together to increase VAMED's procurement from UK suppliers of healthcare equipment and services, as well as growing its operations in the UK. It also identifies opportunities for UK companies to secure business with VAMED projects, backed by UKEF financing, in 20 countries over the next five years. Priority regions for co-operation and potential financing include sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Commonwealth countries.

Signing the agreement in Vienna, Andrea Raffaseder, Managing Director, VAMED Engineering, said:

VAMED Engineering has ambitious plans for continued international growth, and we see great opportunities to work with healthcare companies in the UK as we improve healthcare provision for communities around the world. UK Export Finance will be a key partner, providing innovative finance to our overseas customers to match the unique capabilities of UK suppliers.

The co-operation framework builds on previous collaboration between VAMED Engineering, UKEF and the Department for International Trade, who jointly hosted a supplier fair event in October 2018 showcasing opportunities with VAMED projects in sub-Saharan Africa, attended by nearly 100 UK companies.

## Background

[UK Export Finance](#) is the UK's export credit agency and a government department, working alongside the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

Our mission is to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for want of finance or insurance from the private market. We provide finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts.

Sectors in which UKEF has supported exports include: aerospace, healthcare, infrastructure, telecommunications and transport.

UKEF has a [national regional network of 24 export finance managers](#) supporting export businesses.

Our range of products includes:

- Bond insurance policy
- Bond support scheme
- Buyer & supplier credit financing facility
- Direct lending facility
- Export insurance policy

- Export refinancing facility
- Export working capital scheme
- Letter of credit guarantee scheme

Our [country cover positions](#) outline our current cover policy and risk appetite for each country.

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## [News story: World-leading projects in UK aerospace: funding for best ideas](#)



There is up to £150 million for innovative aerospace projects in a series of regular calls for ideas.

Organisations can submit an express an interest in pursuing an innovative project in aerospace design and manufacture. Successful applicants in this stage will then be invited to apply for funding.

Innovate UK is working with the [Aerospace Technology Institute](#) (ATI) and the [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#) to coordinate the programme.

Funding is part of a £3.9 billion UK aerospace and technology investment between government and industry, which aims to maintain and grow the UK's position as a world leader in civil aerospace.

This latest call follows the [government's announcement of its aerospace sector deal](#). The deal will support the global move towards hybrid-electric and electric propulsion and allow the UK to best exploit emerging opportunities and markets.

### **Projects must strengthen aerospace industry**

The competition is for industrial research projects and capital investment.

Projects must:

- strengthen the UK's role in whole-aircraft design and system integration
- build smarter, more connected and electrified aircraft and technologies that lead to high-value opportunities
- help the UK to become a global leader in large, complex aviation structures, particularly wings
- develop new propulsion technologies, such as large turbofans

## Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for expressions of interest is at midday on 2 January 2019
- projects can be led by a UK-based business, research and technology organisation or an academic organisation
- organisations must sign up to the ATI [framework agreement](#)
- applicants need to show that their expected costs and timescales are in proportion with the project's objectives
- businesses could attract up to 70% of their project costs for industrial research projects and up to 50% for capital investment
- a [briefing event](#) will be held on 17 December 2018, where organisations can find out more and how to submit a quality application

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## [Press release: Totnes flood defence scheme gets £3.8 million upgrade](#)

Totnes' improved flood defence scheme had its opening ribbon cut by Philip Rees, Chairman of the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, and South Hams District councillor John Tucker on Friday 7 December 2018.

The Environment Agency's £3.8 million improvements were needed to reduce the significant risk of river and tidal flooding. The scheme was financed by Defra grant-in-aid through the South West Flood and Coastal Committee and £110,000 from South Hams District Council.

Totnes is a historic town and the Environment Agency has made sure the flood defences are sympathetic to the built and natural environment, whilst reducing flood risk to more than 400 homes and businesses.

George Arnison, Environment Agency Flood Risk Funding Manager, said:

The risk of flooding in Totnes has increased over time. This is partly due to changes in land use in the area and partly due to the effects of climate change on rainfall patterns and sea levels.

The scheme that we opened in Totnes on Friday, which raises and extends the towns flood defences over a distance of nearly 1.5 kilometres, reduces that risk significantly. Over 400 houses and businesses are now significantly better protected from river and tidal flooding.

The flood defences stretch along the River Dart from Broadmarsh Industrial Estate downstream to the Steam Packet Inn. They comprise a mix of different measures to ensure the works were sensitive and sympathetic to both the built and natural environments.

About 500 metres of existing flood defence wall was raised plus 140 metres of new flood wall built at Broadmarsh Industrial Estate and Morrisons' car park.

One of the new flood gates in Totnes

The Environment Agency built new flood walls between properties in Totnes town centre and Marsh Quay and added flood resilient balconies, windows and doors. There are also new flood gates, a slipway and 150m of raised riverside wall. Glass flood panels were used at the Waterside Bistro to ensure customers can still enjoy views of the river.

At Steamer Quay, the Environment Agency replaced 70m of failing quay wall. This work includes specially designed habitat niches in the masonry cladding for estuary organisms to live in, including the nationally important species of tentacled lagoon worm.

Other environmental enhancements included planting over 140 trees and working with the Dartington Estate to restore 7 hectares of wetland upstream of Totnes at Queensmarsh. This has created a mosaic of habitats including grazing marsh, ponds, reed bed and wet woodland, benefiting wetland birds, otters, fish, amphibians and invertebrates.

Cllr John Tucker, Leader of South Hams District council, said:

It's very satisfying to see the hard work of all the agencies involved come to fruition in these improved flood defence works.

I'm pleased that we're able to protect homes and businesses from the worst effects of flooding while still maintaining the character of Totnes, and preserve and protect wildlife habitats at the same time.

The flood defence improvements are needed because of changes in land use in the area and a changing climate.

Flooding has devastating costs for people and businesses. The Environment Agency is investing £2.6 billion from 2015 to 2021 to reduce the risk of flooding for at least 300,000 homes and businesses across England.