

Brexit should be a democracy – Nick Clegg's speech outlining our position on Britain and the EU

Nick began by setting out his key points...

My argument today is simple: our country cannot thrive without a strong economy.

And a strong economy is incompatible with a hard Brexit.

The pound has been falling since the prospect of the referendum was announced in mid-2015, and with average earnings growth set to stall later this year, consumers are inevitably going to feel the Brexit squeeze.

When prices go up and wages do not, millions of people are going to be poorer.

A lot poorer.

The average household is likely to be £500 worse off in 2017 compared to 2016 – and that's before the Brexit negotiations have even started in earnest.

...and explaining the impact of Brexit on our public services...

Over a five-year period, Brexit will have dented the public finances by £59bn.

Money that could have been used to cut waiting times in A&E, keep beds open, and pay for vital medicines.

Money that could have been used to ease the intense pressure on local care services for our ageing population.

Money that could have been used to stop the shameful cuts to school budgets.

The government has effectively maxed out its credit card on Brexit.

Leaving you to pick up the cost.

Nick went on to describe how Brexit could affect our businesses...

The Brexit squeeze is already being felt in the world of business, through higher import prices, a shortage of EU workers, and reduced investment.

Some companies that rely on imported ingredients are already trying to disguise the impacts through creative repackaging, as we've seen with the reduced chocolate in Toblerone.

Others are struggling to find staff: the food and drink industry is more

reliant on EU workers than any other sector in the UK. Around 29% of our food and drink manufacturing workforce are EU nationals.

The fall in the value of the pound is already causing some EU workers to consider leaving the UK, as their wages are now worth significantly less back home.

In some cases jobs have already been lost, including 300 in Newcastle and York, following Nestle's decision to move production to Poland.

So the immediate impacts of the referendum have been much worse than the Conservatives want you to think.

...then turned his attention to Brexit's long-term impacts...

Make no mistake: our economic future is hanging in the balance.

Theresa May could have chosen to remain in the Single Market, as have three other EU countries: Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

She could have chosen to be in the Customs Union. One non-EU country, Turkey, has done so.

She could have tried to persuade the EU to reform the free movement rules to re-focus them on work, instead of giving up without a fight.

Instead, she shunned all of these, elevating immigration over the long-term needs of millions of hard pressed families.

...and the Tories' specious justifications...

This can only be understood as a political decision based on the pressures from the Conservatives' right wing and the Brexit press.

But the Brexit squeeze won't be felt by the Prime Minister and her supporters in the right-wing media; it will be paid for by ordinary people out of their wages, by sick people needing treatment on the NHS, by elderly people needing care, and by children who won't receive the education they deserve.

At this election, the Liberal Democrats are the only major national party that is sounding the alarm against hard Brexit.

...Nick also outlined two Lib Dem manifesto commitments...

Labour's disastrous failure to do the most basic job of an opposition party: holding the government to account, has given the Conservatives a clear run at their extreme version of Brexit.

We will do what Labour have failed to do, and hold the Conservatives' feet to the fire.

Today, we make a commitment to do two things:

First: to fight to secure terms which retain as many of the benefits of EU membership as possible.

Second, to secure a referendum on the final agreement, so that the people can decide the future for the country.

That referendum will offer two choices; accept the deal, or remain in the EU.

Liberal Democrats will campaign for a remain vote.

And reflected on the dishonesties of the Conservative Brexit campaign...

Hard Brexit is the latest in a series of con tricks.

The Conservatives were tricking you when they said there would be £350m a week for the NHS.

They're tricking you by pretending there's no Brexit squeeze.

And they're tricking you when they claim they can secure a deal with the exact same benefits as EU membership.

This trickery is the personal responsibility of Theresa May.

She deserves remorseless, unforgiving scrutiny for the decisions she is seeking to impose upon the country.

... Before launching into his closing statement...

By choosing to be careless with your future, the Conservatives have placed party before country, themselves before all else, politics before the nation.

Don't let the Conservatives get away with making this happen.

Don't let Labour get away with letting this happen.

Britain needs an effective opposition to hard Brexit.

That is why I urge you to vote for a real opposition – the Liberal Democrats.

Speech: “The Syrian Regime are using starve or surrender tactics. That is abhorrent and a clear breach of

International Humanitarian Law."

Thank you Madam President and thank you also to you, Stephen, for your important briefing today and indeed for all your sterling work.

I want to begin as you did Stephen by wholeheartedly condemning the terrorist attack on desperate civilians as they were being evacuated as part of the Four Towns agreement. It is utterly tragic that over 120 people, including a very high number of children, were brutally killed. The United Kingdom condemns this terrible attack. We will work to ensure that whoever is responsible is held to account. I wish also to salute the unity and bravery of the humanitarian response including the response of the White Helmets.

Despite a ceasefire being in place since the end of 2016, we continue to witness terrible ongoing violence. In April alone, we know that the Regime or its allies have carried out aerial attacks on at least six hospitals and three schools in Syria. Six hospitals. Three schools. This is utterly deplorable. I hope others will join me in condemning all such incidents. All of us need to do everything in our power to bring the suffering to an end. And so I ask my Russian colleague, what is Russia doing with its leverage to ensure the Regime stops attacking schools and hospitals?

These attacks once again bring into laser focus the urgent and desperate humanitarian needs of 13 million people in Syria. I am especially concerned by the difficulty in reaching the 1.5 million people who live under siege-like conditions and a further 3.2 million in other hard to reach areas in Syria. All of them urgently require food, water, and medicine.

Roughly 5 million Syrians live in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, but the only regime-besieged area to be reached in 2017 was Khan al Shieh, where 6,000 people were reached with aid. The other besieged areas reached are Deir Ez Zour, besieged by Daesh, where the UN carries out air drops; and the Four Towns, besieged by the Iranian-backed Hizballah and armed opposition groups. This is a tiny proportion of aid reaching those people who are in most need of it.

Let me be clear. The Syrian Regime are using starve or surrender tactics. That is abhorrent and a clear breach of International Humanitarian Law.

I am especially concerned about the 420,000 innocent civilians in the besieged part of Eastern Ghouta, where supplies are rapidly running out. There are urgent medical needs, shortages of basic food items, and no water or power supplies.

I fully support Stephen's call for a pause in fighting to allow the UN and its humanitarian partners to safely enter Eastern Ghouta.

At the International Syria Support Group meeting in Geneva on 20 April, Russia committed to press the Regime to allow the UN and its humanitarian partners to access Douma, one part of Eastern Ghouta. What is the situation

one week later? The Regime has not acted. There is still no convoy. We owe it to the people of Douma to do everything we can to improve this situation.

The UN has received the requisite assurances from the relevant armed opposition groups to allow them to deliver assistance to Douma, and it has identified a safe route to enter. The only things now lacking are for the Assad regime to issue a facilitation letter and to pause its aerial bombardment of the area for long enough for the UN and its humanitarian partners to enter.

If Russia is unable to ensure that the regime allows access, we call on the Security Council to act to ensure the UN is able to deliver urgent supplies to Douma in the first instance.

Madam President, I will reiterate now what I have said many times before, there can be no sustainable peace until there is a political transition. The Asad regime bears overwhelming responsibility for the suffering of the Syrian people. I implore the whole of the Security Council to work in unity to end the conflict for the sake of the Syrian people.

Thank you.

[The cost of a Tory vote](#)

We've already seen the damage the Tories can do, first with no majority and then with a small majority. But in the last few months it's become clearer what a emboldened, out-of-control Tory government would mean.

[Theresa May's campaign is going to extraordinary efforts to avoid any form of public scrutiny: we've still not even heard from the Prime Minister on the alarming leaks from Brussels – Andrew Gwynne](#)

Andrew Gwynne MP, Labour's National Election Chair,
commenting on reports that local reporters were "locked in a room and

banned from filming” during Theresa May’s visit to Cornwall today, said:

“Theresa May’s campaign is going to extraordinary efforts to avoid any form of public scrutiny.

“What is especially worrying is that we’ve still not even heard from the Prime Minister on the alarming leaks from Brussels, which expose just how reckless her Brexit plans are.

“Rather than hiding away, the Prime Minister needs to come out and explain just what on earth is going on.”

[Brexit announcement: Molly Scott Cato 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.

Molly Scott Cato’s full speech (check against delivery):

Firstly, as an MEP, working in the European Parliament; seeing firsthand the many positive things the EU is doing, I would like to congratulate Caroline for refusing to vote to trigger article 50.

I would also like to thank the 113 other MPs – from Labour, LibDems, SNP, and Plaid Cymru – for doing likewise. What we saw on Article 50 was a genuine progressive alliance against the government’s plans for an extreme Brexit.

It is only a tragedy that so few Labour MPs followed their hearts and their minds and instead capitulated both to Theresa May and the whips within their own Party.

Since the 24th June last year, it seems to me that it has been the Tory government that has been moving us towards the hard Brexit cliff edge, but Labour that has stood ready to push us off.

The Party has shown itself hopelessly divided and the failure to oppose the government on this the most critical issue for generations has played straight into the hands of the Tory Right.

By voting in such large numbers to trigger Article 50, without fighting for any conditions, Labour MPs have effectively handed Theresa May a blank cheque.

And we know what the small print on the back of this cheque is:

Invoking delegated powers, which would enable the government to make post-Brexit laws behind Parliament's back.

A Great Repeal Bill allowing the government to tear up EU legislation that has both improved and protected our environment, and defended workers' rights. This bonfire of regulation is a threat to everything we hold dear – clean air, clean water, landscapes where wildlife can flourish – and my meetings with businesses tell me that it is not what they want.

We have also seen the politics of consensus between EU nations replaced by the language of hostility, whether it be the threat of gunships to solve a dispute about Gibraltar or the threat of creating a tax haven if you cannot get your way on trade deals.

But wait. Didn't we hear Labour's Brexit spokesperson, Keir Starmer, say that Labour would rip up Theresa May's Brexit plan?

We should not be taken in by Labour's apparently softer more considered approach to Brexit. Their message is confused and contradictory and still has some uncomfortable hard edges.

They promise to guarantee existing rights to all EU nationals living in the UK, but say they will end free movement. Yet they also want to retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union.

Taking a tough stance on freedom of movement is incompatible with membership of the single market, something Keir Starmer himself acknowledged.

Greens believe that remaining in the single market is vital for protecting jobs and workers' rights. That in turn means defending free movement. In particular, we want young people to continue to enjoy the rights enjoyed by their parents and grandparents – the right to travel, study and work across Europe.

If Labour believe, like the Tories, that the fundamental rules of the club – such as the four freedoms – will be bent or watered down to accommodate a hardline UK, they clearly do not understand that the EU works by unity of purpose. Theresa May's attempt to portray the remaining 27 EU members as somehow ganging up on Britain shows that she shares her party's inability to understand how the EU works. Her approach to the negotiations demonstrates that she is constitutionally unable to cooperate and her confrontational stance is damaging our relationships with our closest neighbours for generations to come.

Like Labour, we will of course ditch the great repeal bill, but we would replace this with a Great Reform Bill, to deliver a fair and proportional election system, reform the House of Lords and introduce a written constitution, so we know what our rights are.

Labour say they would prioritise jobs and the economy in negotiations with the EU. These are of course vital, which is why we say we should stay in the

single market. But such a focus risks side-lining the environment. This is why the Green Party is committed to both a new Environmental Protection Act and a Clean Air Act to ensure environmental protections are maintained and enhanced.

Labour's call for parliament to be given a truly meaningful vote on the final Brexit deal is welcome, but their reluctance to give British people the same right shows a blatant disregard for democracy.

This brings us to our policy announcement today. Greens believe that the people of the UK must be given an opportunity to have their say through a ratification referendum. It is a democratic requirement that when we get to the end of the negotiating process, and we see what Brexit really means as opposed to a series of promises that cannot be fulfilled, we have a chance to decide whether that is better than continued EU membership.

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; and an opportunity to hand control to powerful corporations and wealthy elites and turn us into a tax haven.

A ratification referendum is the chance to *give back control*.

In two years time, we must give back control to the people, providing them with an opportunity to accept or reject the future that is on offer, or decidewhether actually we are better off remaining a full member of the EU.

So on June 8th:

Vote Green to block hard Brexit.

Vote Green to have a real say on our shared future.

Vote Green to Give Back Control.

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)