

# Statement to Parliament: Prime Minister's Commons statement on triggering Article 50

Thank you Mr Speaker,

Today the government acts on the democratic will of the British people. And it acts, too, on the clear and convincing position of this House.

A few minutes ago in Brussels, the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the EU handed a letter to the President of the European Council on my behalf, confirming the government's decision to invoke Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

The Article 50 process is now underway. And in accordance with the wishes of the British people, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union.

This is an historic moment from which there can be no turning back. Britain is leaving the European Union. We are going to make our own decisions and our own laws. We are going to take control of the things that matter most to us. And we are going to take this opportunity to build a stronger, fairer Britain – a country that our children and grandchildren are proud to call home. That is our ambition and our opportunity. That is what this government is determined to do.

Mr Speaker, at moments like these – great turning points in our national story – the choices we make define the character of our nation. We can choose to say the task ahead is too great. We can choose to turn our face to the past and believe it can't be done. Or we can look forward with optimism and hope – and to believe in the enduring power of the British spirit.

I choose to believe in Britain and that our best days lie ahead. And I do so because I am confident that we have the vision and the plan to use this moment to build a better Britain. For, leaving the European Union presents us with a unique opportunity. It is this generation's chance to shape a brighter future for our country. A chance to step back and ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be.

My answer is clear. I want the United Kingdom to emerge from this period of change stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking than ever before. I want us to be a secure, prosperous, tolerant country – a magnet for international talent and a home to the pioneers and innovators who will shape the world ahead.

I want us to be a truly Global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too. A country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike.

And that is why I have set out a clear and ambitious plan for the negotiations ahead. It is a plan for a new deep and special partnership between Britain and the European Union. A partnership of values. A partnership of interests. A partnership based on cooperation in areas such as security and economic affairs. And a partnership that works in the best interests of the United Kingdom, the European Union and the wider world.

Because perhaps now more than ever, the world needs the liberal, democratic values of Europe – values that this United Kingdom shares. And that is why, while we are leaving the institutions of the European Union, we are not leaving Europe. We will remain a close friend and ally. We will be a committed partner. We will play our part to ensure that Europe is able to project its values and defend itself from security threats. And we will do all that we can to help the European Union prosper and succeed.

So Mr Speaker, in the letter that has been delivered to President Tusk today – copies of which I have placed in the library of the House – I have been clear that the deep and special partnership we seek is in the best interests of the United Kingdom and of the European Union too.

I have been clear that we will work constructively – in a spirit of sincere cooperation – to bring this partnership into being. And I have been clear that we should seek to agree the terms of this future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal, within the next 2 years.

I am ambitious for Britain. And the objectives I have set out for these negotiations remain. We will deliver certainty wherever possible so that business, the public sector and everybody else has as much clarity as we can provide as we move through the process. It is why, tomorrow, we will publish a White Paper confirming our plans to convert the 'acquis' into British law, so that everyone will know where they stand.

And it is why I have been clear that the government will put the final deal that is agreed between the UK and the EU to a vote in both Houses of Parliament before it comes into force. We will take control of our own laws and bring an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Britain. Leaving the European Union will mean that our laws will be made in Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. And those laws will be interpreted by judges not in Luxembourg, but in courts across this country.

We will strengthen the Union of the 4 nations that comprise our United Kingdom. We will negotiate as one United Kingdom, taking account of the specific interests of every nation and region of the UK and when it comes to the powers that we will take back from Europe, we will consult fully on which powers should reside in Westminster and which should be passed on to the devolved administrations.

But Mr Speaker, no decisions currently taken by the devolved administrations will be removed from them. And it is the expectation of the government that the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will see a significant increase in their decision-making power as a result of this process.

We want to maintain the common travel area with the Republic of Ireland. There should be no return to the borders of the past. We will control immigration so that we continue to attract the brightest and the best to work or study in Britain, but manage the process properly so that our immigration system serves the national interest.

We seek to guarantee the rights of EU citizens who are already living in Britain, and the rights of British nationals in other member states as early as we can. That is set out very clearly in the letter as an early priority for the talks ahead. We will ensure that workers' rights are fully protected and maintained. Indeed, under my leadership, not only will the government protect the rights of workers, we will build on them.

We will pursue a bold and ambitious free trade agreement with the European Union that allows for the freest possible trade in goods and services between Britain and the EU's member states; that gives British companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets; and that lets European businesses do the same in Britain.

Because European leaders have said many times that we cannot 'cherry pick' and remain members of the single market without accepting the 4 freedoms that are indivisible. We respect that position. And as accepting those freedoms is incompatible with the democratically expressed will of the British people, we will no longer be members of the single market.

We are going to make sure that we can strike trade agreements with countries from outside the European Union too. Because important though our trade with the EU is and will remain, it is clear that the UK needs to increase significantly its trade with the fastest growing export markets in the world.

We hope to continue to collaborate with our European partners in the areas of science, education, research and technology, so that the UK is one of the best places for science and innovation. We seek continued cooperation with our European partners in important areas such as crime, terrorism and foreign affairs.

And it is our aim to deliver a smooth and orderly Brexit – reaching an agreement about our future partnership by the time the 2-year Article 50 process has concluded, then moving into a phased process of implementation in which Britain, the EU institutions and member states prepare for the new arrangements that will exist between us.

Mr Speaker, we understand that there will be consequences for the UK of leaving the EU. We know that we will lose influence over the rules that affect the European economy. We know that UK companies that trade with the EU will have to align with rules agreed by institutions of which we are no longer a part, just as we do in other overseas markets. We accept that.

However, we approach these talks constructively, respectfully, and in a spirit of sincere cooperation. For it is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that we should use this process to deliver our objectives in a fair and orderly manner. It is in the interests of both the

United Kingdom and the European Union that there should be as little disruption as possible. And it is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that Europe should remain strong, prosperous and capable of projecting its values in the world.

At a time when the growth of global trade is slowing and there are signs that protectionist instincts are on the rise in many parts of the world, Europe has a responsibility to stand up for free trade in the interests of all our citizens.

With Europe's security more fragile today than at any time since the end of the Cold War, weakening our cooperation and failing to stand up for European values would be a costly mistake.

Our vote to leave the EU was no rejection of the values that we share as fellow Europeans. As a European country, we will continue to play our part in promoting and supporting those values – during the negotiations and once they are done.

We will continue to be reliable partners, willing allies and close friends. We want to continue to buy goods and services from the EU, and sell them ours. We want to trade with them as freely as possible, and work with one another to make sure we are all safer, more secure and more prosperous through continued friendship.

Indeed, in an increasingly unstable world, we must continue to forge the closest possible security co-operation to keep our people safe. We face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism. That message was only reinforced by the abhorrent attack on Westminster Bridge and this place last week.

So there should be no reason why we should not agree a new deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU that works for us all.

Mr Speaker, I know that this is a day of celebration for some and disappointment for others. The referendum last June was divisive at times. Not everyone shared the same point of view, or voted in the same way. The arguments on both side were passionate.

But, Mr Speaker, when I sit around the negotiating table in the months ahead, I will represent every person in the whole United Kingdom – young and old, rich and poor, city, town, country and all the villages and hamlets in between.

And yes, those EU nationals who have made this country their home and it is my fierce determination to get the right deal for every single person in this country. For, as we face the opportunities ahead of us on this momentous journey, our shared values, interests and ambitions can – and must – bring us together.

We all want to see a Britain that is stronger than it is today. We all want a country that is fairer so that everyone has the chance to succeed. We all want a nation that is safe and secure for our children and grandchildren. We

all want to live in a truly Global Britain that gets out and builds relationships with old friends and new allies around the world.

These are the ambitions of this government's Plan for Britain. Ambitions that unite us, so that we are no longer defined by the vote we cast, but by our determination to make a success of the result.

We are one great union of people and nations with a proud history and a bright future. And now that the decision to leave has been made – and the process is underway – it is time to come together. For this great national moment needs a great national effort. An effort to shape a stronger future for Britain.

So let us do so together. Let us come together and work together. Let us together choose to believe in Britain with optimism and hope. For if we do, we can together make the most of the opportunities ahead. We can make a success of this moment. And we can together build a stronger, fairer, better Britain – a Britain our children and grandchildren are proud to call home.

I commend this statement to the House.

---

**[“I am writing to give effect to the democratic decision of the people of the United Kingdom.” The full text of May's letter moving Article 50.](#)**

*The Prime Minister, 29 March 2017.*

*“Dear President Tusk,*

*On 23 June last year, the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. As I have said before, that decision was no rejection of the values we share as fellow Europeans. Nor was it an attempt to do harm to the European Union or any of the remaining member states. On the contrary, the United Kingdom wants the European Union to succeed and prosper. Instead, the referendum was a vote to restore, as we see it, our national self-determination. We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe – and we want to remain committed partners and allies to our friends across the continent.*

*Earlier this month, the United Kingdom Parliament confirmed the result of the referendum by voting with clear and convincing majorities in both of its Houses for the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. The Bill was passed by Parliament on 13 March and it received Royal Assent from Her*

*Majesty The Queen and became an Act of Parliament on 16 March.*

*Today, therefore, I am writing to give effect to the democratic decision of the people of the United Kingdom. I hereby notify the European Council in accordance with Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Union. In addition, in accordance with the same Article 50(2) as applied by Article 106a of the Treaty Establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, I hereby notify the European Council of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Atomic Energy Community. References in this letter to the European Union should therefore be taken to include a reference to the European Atomic Energy Community.*

*This letter sets out the approach of Her Majesty's Government to the discussions we will have about the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and about the deep and special partnership we hope to enjoy – as your closest friend and neighbour – with the European Union once we leave. We believe that these objectives are in the interests not only of the United Kingdom but of the European Union and the wider world too.*

*It is in the best interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that we should use the forthcoming process to deliver these objectives in a fair and orderly manner, and with as little disruption as possible on each side. We want to make sure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and is capable of projecting its values, leading in the world, and defending itself from security threats. We want the United Kingdom, through a new deep and special partnership with a strong European Union, to play its full part in achieving these goals. We therefore believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the European Union.*

*The Government wants to approach our discussions with ambition, giving citizens and businesses in the United Kingdom and the European Union – and indeed from third countries around the world – as much certainty as possible, as early as possible.*

*I would like to propose some principles that may help to shape our coming discussions, but before I do so, I should update you on the process we will be undertaking at home, in the United Kingdom.*

*The process in the United Kingdom*

*As I have announced already, the Government will bring forward legislation that will repeal the Act of Parliament – the European Communities Act 1972 – that gives effect to EU law in our country. This legislation will, wherever practical and appropriate, in effect convert the body of existing European Union law (the "acquis") into UK law. This means there will be certainty for UK citizens and for anybody from the European Union who does business in the United Kingdom. The Government will consult on how we design and implement this legislation, and we will publish a White Paper tomorrow. We also intend to bring forward several other pieces of legislation that address specific issues relating to our departure from the European Union, also with a view to*

ensuring continuity and certainty, in particular for businesses. We will of course continue to fulfil our responsibilities as a member state while we remain a member of the European Union, and the legislation we propose will not come into effect until we leave.

From the start and throughout the discussions, we will negotiate as one United Kingdom, taking due account of the specific interests of every nation and region of the UK as we do so. When it comes to the return of powers back to the United Kingdom, we will consult fully on which powers should reside in Westminster and which should be devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But it is the expectation of the Government that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration.

#### *Negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union*

The United Kingdom wants to agree with the European Union a deep and special partnership that takes in both economic and security cooperation. To achieve this, we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU.

If, however, we leave the European Union without an agreement the default position is that we would have to trade on World Trade Organisation terms. In security terms a failure to reach agreement would mean our cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism would be weakened. In this kind of scenario, both the United Kingdom and the European Union would of course cope with the change, but it is not the outcome that either side should seek. We must therefore work hard to avoid that outcome.

It is for these reasons that we want to be able to agree a deep and special partnership, taking in both economic and security cooperation, but it is also because we want to play our part in making sure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and able to lead in the world, projecting its values and defending itself from security threats. And we want the United Kingdom to play its full part in realising that vision for our continent.

#### *Proposed principles for our discussions*

Looking ahead to the discussions which we will soon begin, I would like to suggest some principles that we might agree to help make sure that the process is as smooth and successful as possible.

i. We should engage with one another constructively and respectfully, in a spirit of sincere cooperation. Since I became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom I have listened carefully to you, to my fellow EU Heads of Government and the Presidents of the European Commission and Parliament. That is why the United Kingdom does not seek membership of the single market: we understand and respect your position that the four freedoms of the single market are indivisible and there can be no "cherry picking". We also understand that there will be consequences for the UK of leaving the EU: we know that we will lose influence over the rules that affect the European economy. We also know that UK companies will, as they trade within the EU,

have to align with rules agreed by institutions of which we are no longer a part – just as UK companies do in other overseas markets.

ii. We should always put our citizens first. There is obvious complexity in the discussions we are about to undertake, but we should remember that at the heart of our talks are the interests of all our citizens. There are, for example, many citizens of the remaining member states living in the United Kingdom, and UK citizens living elsewhere in the European Union, and we should aim to strike an early agreement about their rights.

iii. We should work towards securing a comprehensive agreement. We want to agree a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation. We will need to discuss how we determine a fair settlement of the UK's rights and obligations as a departing member state, in accordance with the law and in the spirit of the United Kingdom's continuing partnership with the EU. But we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU.

iv. We should work together to minimise disruption and give as much certainty as possible. We should. Investors, businesses and citizens in both the UK and across the remaining 27 member states – and those from third countries around the world – want to be able to plan. In order to avoid any cliff-edge as we move from our current relationship to our future partnership, people and businesses in both the UK and the EU would benefit from implementation periods to adjust in a smooth and orderly way to new arrangements. It would help both sides to minimise unnecessary disruption if we agree this principle early in the process.

v. In particular, we must pay attention to the UK's unique relationship with the Republic of Ireland and the importance of the peace process in Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is the only EU member state with a land border with the United Kingdom. We want to avoid a return to a hard border between our two countries, to be able to maintain the Common Travel Area between us, and to make sure that the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not harm the Republic of Ireland. We also have an important responsibility to make sure that nothing is done to jeopardise the peace process in Northern Ireland, and to continue to uphold the Belfast Agreement.

vi. We should begin technical talks on detailed policy areas as soon as possible, but we should prioritise the biggest challenges. Agreeing a high-level approach to the issues arising from our withdrawal will of course be an early priority. But we also propose a bold and ambitious Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union. This should be of greater scope and ambition than any such agreement before it so that it covers sectors crucial to our linked economies such as financial services and network industries. This will require detailed technical talks, but as the UK is an existing EU member state, both sides have regulatory frameworks and standards that already match. We should therefore prioritise how we manage the evolution of our regulatory frameworks to maintain a fair and open trading environment, and how we resolve disputes. On the scope of the partnership between us – on both economic and security matters – my officials

*will put forward detailed proposals for deep, broad and dynamic cooperation.*

*vii. We should continue to work together to advance and protect our shared European values. Perhaps now more than ever, the world needs the liberal, democratic values of Europe. We want to play our part to ensure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and able to lead in the world, projecting its values and defending itself from security threats.*

*The task before us*

*As I have said, the Government of the United Kingdom wants to agree a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation. At a time when the growth of global trade is slowing and there are signs that protectionist instincts are on the rise in many parts of the world, Europe has a responsibility to stand up for free trade in the interest of all our citizens. Likewise, Europe's security is more fragile today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Weakening our cooperation for the prosperity and protection of our citizens would be a costly mistake. The United Kingdom's objectives for our future partnership remain those set out in my Lancaster House speech of 17 January and the subsequent White Paper published on 2 February.*

*We recognise that it will be a challenge to reach such a comprehensive agreement within the two-year period set out for withdrawal discussions in the Treaty. But we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU. We start from a unique position in these discussions – close regulatory alignment, trust in one another's institutions, and a spirit of cooperation stretching back decades. It is for these reasons, and because the future partnership between the UK and the EU is of such importance to both sides, that I am sure it can be agreed in the time period set out by the Treaty.*

*The task before us is momentous but it should not be beyond us. After all, the institutions and the leaders of the European Union have succeeded in bringing together a continent blighted by war into a union of peaceful nations, and supported the transition of dictatorships to democracy. Together, I know we are capable of reaching an agreement about the UK's rights and obligations as a departing member state, while establishing a deep and special partnership that contributes towards the prosperity, security and global power of our continent.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Theresa May"*

---

## **Children's Secretary committed to national approach to advocacy services**

Ahead of a debate on the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into advocacy provision, the Cabinet Secretary said he wanted to ensure that all eligible children from across Wales can access an independent professional advocate. He added that this will be implemented by all Local Authorities by June 2017.

Carl Sargeant said:

"Statutory independent advocacy services are crucial in protecting and safeguarding some of the most vulnerable children in Wales.

"We can't have children in one area getting a different service to others, so we absolutely have to have every local authority signed up. I have committed to providing additional funding to meet the cost of this national approach.

"Local Authorities have confirmed their support and we are monitoring progress to ensure implementation by June 2017."

---

## **Press release: Homes and Communities Agency appoints housebuilding expert to spearhead Accelerated Construction**

Stephen is highly expert in delivering major housing developments on public land, having spent the last 11 years as the Growth and Partnerships Director at Barratt Partnerships, the housebuilder's national public sector team.

The HCA is leading the drive to increase the scale and pace of construction to get more homes built now, at the same time as working with new entrants to develop smarter approaches to housebuilding that will expand the market over the long term.

Stephen will lead the agency's Accelerated Construction unit, reporting to Chief Executive Nick Walkley. The £2bn programme involves the HCA taking direct action to build homes on surplus public sector land to increase the pace of housebuilding and diversifying the market by supporting smaller builders and modern methods of construction.

Nick Walkley, HCA Chief Executive, said:

This is a very important appointment for the agency and we've very pleased to have found someone who has the same ambition and passion to transform housebuilding in this country so more people can have a home of their own. Stephen is a private sector housebuilding leader with a comprehensive understanding of developing on public land. He will bring strong leadership skills, extensive industry knowledge and a track record for doing things differently.

Sir Edward Lister, HCA Chairman, said:

This appointment is further evidence of our renewed ambition to increase the scale and pace of construction and pioneer new approaches to diversify the housing market. We will ensure more homes are built for people across all housing tenures through a whole series of measures and interventions, including direct delivery on public land and encouraging modern methods of construction.

Stephen Kinsella said:

I am excited by this opportunity to create a new delivery model for housing supply and increase innovation in the sector. The major housebuilders have a huge role to play in increasing supply but it is clear to me that Accelerated Construction and other HCA-backed initiatives are essential to diversify the market and ensure we can meet the pent-up demand for housing in this country.

For media enquiries please email [shaun.harley@hca.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:shaun.harley@hca.gsi.gov.uk) at the HCA or phone on 07989 203272.

The Homes and Communities Agency is the government's national housing delivery body. For more information visit the [website](#).

Accelerated Construction is designed to help tackle the undersupply of new homes. Building on the Direct Commissioning pilot, Government will take direct action and use its own surplus land as a lever to drive increased delivery of homes. Rather than sell land directly to the market, the HCA will enter into partnerships with developers with robust contractual conditions, which will:

- Accelerate housing supply on surplus public sector land, by ensuring rapid starts on sites that would otherwise be disposed straight to market, with no guarantees to when building of homes would start.

- Build new manufacturing supply chains, by seeking enhanced use of modern methods of construction (MMC). This will provide a strong pipeline of orders to give MMC firms the confidence to invest and help drive industry to be more efficient and productive.
- Support low and medium volume housebuilders to grow and new entrants to enter the market. By using our own land as equity rather than requiring an upfront receipt and taking on some sales risk we are able to lower developer risk, bringing new entrants into the market and helping low and medium volume builders to overcome issues with access to finance and stretch their existing equity to build more homes.

Through £1.7 billion of investment, we will deliver up to 15,000 housing starts in this Parliament. The first site going through the programme is Lower Graylingwell, in Chichester, The vacant site borders the University of Chichester's Campus, an NHS health centre, and existing housing. Through Accelerated Construction, it will deliver 160 new homes at double the local market rate through a SME builder.

---

## [Kezia Dugdale responds to Brexit](#)

Commenting on the triggering of Article 50, which will start the Brexit process, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

*"This is a deeply divisive moment in our country's history. The letter signed by the Prime Minister will have a seismic impact on Scotland's economy, risking thousands of jobs and livelihoods.*

*"At a time of such uncertainty, Scotland deserves better than two governments – the Tories and the SNP – which have adopted such extreme constitutional positions and are so determined to create deep divisions with our closest neighbours.*

*"I accept that those of us who backed Remain lost the EU referendum and the strength of our democracy rests on our respect for the will of the people.*

*"But while I accept that the UK is leaving the European Union, I am not prepared to stand by as Theresa May forges ahead with a plan for a settlement that will do incalculable damage to Scotland and the UK.*

*"Leave voters didn't back Brexit to make themselves poorer, but that is exactly what will happen under the current plans.*

*"I have written to the Prime Minister urging her to change her approach and secure the best possible Brexit deal, which should include free access to the single market for Scottish exporters, and allow Scottish firms to continue to*

*recruit workers from elsewhere in the EU.*

*“The only thing more damaging for our economy than a Tory Brexit is the SNP’s reckless plan for independence. We will never support something that brings greater hardship to working families. Unlike the SNP and the Tories, we will always stand up for Scotland and the best interests of people who live and work here.”*

Read Kez's letter to the Prime Minister

here: <http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/blog/entry/kezia-dugdale-outlines-best-brexit-deal-for-scotland>