



HOUSE OF COMMONS

12th March 2019

Dear Loughborough Constituent

Later today the House of Commons will vote for a second time on whether to approve the Prime Minister's Brexit-related draft Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration.

As I said in my January letter to you this is a vote on an issue which re-sets the UK's foreign policy, trade policy, economic policy and security policy for decades to come. It is also one of the most divisive political issues I've ever come across. In this constituency the vote was almost tied – the House of Commons Library estimates that we voted 50.1% to Leave the EU which is one of the closest votes of any constituency.

I am very grateful to every constituent who has shared their thoughts on Brexit, even if we disagree. Having said that, as I said before, I've still only heard from less than 3% of the over 79,000 constituents I represent.

In recent weeks the majority of messages I've had have continued to fall into three distinct categories – reject the draft agreement and support the calls for a second referendum, reject the draft agreement and accept a 'no deal' outcome or vote for the draft agreement, however imperfect it is. It is not easy to reconcile these views, all of which I know are sincerely and often very strongly held. When voting I have to take a view on what I judge to be in the overall best interests of everyone in my constituency, which I hope also aligns with the national interest, based on the many different views expressed to me on Brexit, which as shown here can be diametrically opposed to each other. I have, however, been clear that I do not support a second referendum.

Since the agreement was not approved in January I have worked, as I said I would, with MPs on all sides to see if we could find a solution which would get majority support in the House of Commons. You can find details of the Malthouse Compromise on my website. As a result of our work it is clear that alternative arrangements to the current Irish backstop protocol can be put in place which would avoid the need for a hard border on the island of Ireland. These alternative arrangements have now been included in the legally binding text between the UK and EU published last night which supplements the Withdrawal Agreement.



The difference with this week's vote is that we are now so much closer to the planned 'exit day' of 29th March 2019. The Prime Minister has said that if the agreement is not approved today the House of Commons will then have a vote on a motion that would seek "explicit consent" for a no-deal departure and potentially then a vote on whether the UK should ask the EU to extend the Article 50 notification process.

I have reflected very, very carefully and for many, many hours on these votes. Of course, there may be further developments between this letter being circulated and the votes taking place which could alter the situation.

For me the key judgments about the vote(s) this week are – does the outcome of the vote begin to create a more stable and certain environment for individuals, employers and businesses, does my vote support an outcome which enables an exit, as the majority voted for in June 2016, to happen in an orderly way, would the outcome of the vote make it harder or easier for the Government to be able to continue to govern between now and the next election (to do all the other things most people want their Government to be able to do) and would the outcome enable all the necessary Brexit withdrawal legislation to be passed in the next few weeks and months in an organised way?

I believe that approving the Withdrawal Agreement means that these questions can be answered with a 'yes', which is why I will support it today.

Should the House vote against the Agreement, as mentioned, we would then have a vote on whether we should leave the EU without a deal in place. If that is subsequently rejected, we would vote on whether the UK Government should request an extension to Article 50.

As we don't know what the motions for those debates will be nor the Government's position on them it is hard to have a fixed view on voting on them at this stage. But I remain highly concerned, on the basis of local conversations, about the disruption likely to be caused by leaving the EU on 29th March without a withdrawal agreement in place. I also need to hear more details about the purpose of any extension to Article 50. A short extension which simply prolongs the Brexit uncertainty would resolve nothing.

I hope this second letter is helpful and please do visit my website (www.nickymorgan.com) for further information on my views as the next few days unfold.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP