

Parliament must have a meaningful vote on the final Brexit deal

The EU (Withdrawal) Bill **must** be amended to **guarantee Parliament gets a meaningful vote on the final Brexit deal**. **MPs must support Amendment 7 to clause 9**, to make exiting the EU **“subject to the prior enactment of a statute by Parliament approving the final terms of withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.”**¹

A meaningful vote on Brexit must:

- be on the **final deal**;
- happen **before the UK leaves** the EU;
- allow Parliament to **reject all possible deals**, including no deal, and enable it to reject **more than one** kind of deal.

The government has verbally promised a meaningful vote on the final deal and stated that it will happen before we leave the EU. However, **the Government’s ‘take it or leave it’ approach does not amount to a meaningful vote**. As negotiations continue to stall and no deal or a “virtual no deal”² become a more likely outcome, it is increasingly clear that a truly meaningful vote needs to be enshrined in legislation. No deal or a virtual no deal would mean an extreme form of Brexit being delivered at huge cost the UK, its services and its people’s prospects, especially the poorest and those living outside the South East.

What constitutes a ‘meaningful vote’?

- **A meaningful vote must be on the final deal.** A vote solely on a transitional deal, the divorce settlement and a loose sketch of the final deal would not be meaningful. Parliament must have the full Brexit picture.
- **Parliament must have the option to reject any deal, including ‘no deal’, and be able to reject more than one deal. *Take it or leave it Brexit* directly conflicts with having a meaningful vote.** If parliament can’t force the government to renegotiate they have no option but to accept the deal, since ‘no deal’ would mean Extreme Brexit and would be worse than a ‘bad deal’.
- **To be meaningful, the vote must take place at least 6 months before the UK actually leaves the EU (currently March 29th, 2019).** Therefore, under the current timeline, a meaningful vote must be by October 2018, allowing enough time for the European Parliament and the necessary members states to approve it.³
- **All options must remain on the table including ‘no Brexit’ for a vote to be meaningful.** There must be a choice between Brexit and exploring a different deal with the EU and all attempts to enshrine Brexit in legislation should be avoided.

Why is parliament entitled to a meaningful vote?

Without a vote, allowing Parliament to reject all deals, Parliament cannot fulfil its sovereign duties. One of the main promises of the leave campaign was to keep Parliament sovereign. Parliament should therefore have the final say on how or if we leave the EU.

What the government is currently offering?

Parliament has been promised a meaningful vote by government. In February 2017, David Jones MP, a Minister for the Department for Exiting the EU said:

‘we intend that the **vote will cover not only the withdrawal arrangements but also the future relationship with the European Union**. I can confirm that the Government will bring forward a motion on the final agreement, to **be approved by both Houses of Parliament before it is concluded**. We expect and intend that this will happen **before the European Parliament debates and votes on the final agreement**.’⁴

However, what David Jones offered amounts to a take it or leave it Brexit:

‘it will be a meaningful vote. As I have said, it will be the **choice between leaving the European Union with a negotiated deal or not**.’⁵

In October 2017, the government placed a meaningful vote into question when David Davis MP responded to a question by Seema Malhotra MP about the meaningful vote process by saying:

“It’s no secret that the way the union makes its decisions tends to be at the 59th minute of the 11th hour of the last day. That’s precisely what I would expect to happen here...”⁶

When Malhotra asked if the vote could come after the UK formally exited the EU (under the current article 50 process timeline), he said: “Yes, it could be. It can’t come before we have the deal.”⁷ **These statements suggests that Davis is prepared for the negotiations to continue past the Article 50 deadline, meaning our membership to the EU would lapse, with no turning back, before Parliament can vote on a deal.**

MPs must vote for Amendment 7 to make sure Parliament is sovereign and has all options on the table when the final deal comes to the vote.

¹ House of Commons, ‘European Union (Withdrawal) Bill: Amendment 7 to Clause 9, page 6, line 45’, *House of Commons*, 30 October 2017, [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/amend/euwithdrawal_rm_cwh_1030.pdf#page=\[82\]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/amend/euwithdrawal_rm_cwh_1030.pdf#page=[82])

² By no deal, Best for Britain implies complete no deal - the UK and the EU failing to reach any agreement - as well as virtual no deal - a few piecemeal agreements reached in some key areas but no overall deal.

³ Stephen Bush, ‘Is a “meaningful” Commons vote on the Brexit deal even possible?’, *New Statesman*, 14 November 2017, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2017/11/meaningful-commons-vote-brexit-deal-even-possible>

⁴ David Jones, ‘European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill: Vol 621’, *House of Commons Hansard*, 7 February 2017, <https://goo.gl/MbHwbo>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Heather Stewart and Rajeev Syal, ‘David Davis says he ‘expects and intends’ Commons vote on Brexit deal’, *Guardian*, 25 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/25/david-davis-mps-might-not-get-vote-on-final-deal-until-after-brexit>

⁷ Heather Stewart, ‘Tory rebels warn they are ‘deadly serious’ about forcing Brexit concessions’, *Guardian*, 26 October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/26/government-in-a-mess-over-brexit-says-keir-starmer>