



**Alan Campbell MP Weekly Update**

**Friday 31st March 2017**



# Commons News

## **Article 50 (Government Statement)**

On Wednesday, the Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons informing MPs that she had formally started the process for the UK's exit from the European Union.

The UK voted to leave the EU, and I respect that decision. Now that Article 50 has been triggered, our country will undertake the most important negotiations that it has in modern times and the next steps will be crucial.

It is vital that the Prime Minister secures the best deal for the country. However, she has already said that she believes no deal with the EU would be better than a "bad deal". I believe no deal would be the worst possible outcome and it would be a national failure if protections for jobs and living standards, for example, were not secured.

I will therefore judge any final deal negotiated by the Government against six tests relating to the impact of Brexit on: the UK's future cooperation with the EU, our economy, immigration, fundamental rights, national security, and the distribution of power and opportunity across the country.

I want to see our country have a collaborative and co-operative future relationship with the EU and a partnership based on our shared values, common aims and mutual benefit. I can assure you that I will use all means possible to hold the Government to account on this over the coming months.

## **Neighbourhood Planning Bill (Lords Amendments)**

On Tuesday, the House of Commons debated the Neighbourhood Planning Bill. This included consideration of amendments made in the House of Lords. The key purpose of the Bill is to identify and free up more land to build homes on to give communities as much certainty as possible about where and when development will take place. It also aims to speed up delivery of new homes by reducing the time it takes from planning permission to building work commencing and new homes being delivered.

I believe it is important to recognise the value of the planning system in delivering developments that are well planned, in the right place and supported by the infrastructure they need. This includes access to good quality healthcare, schools, further and higher education, transport links and employment.

On Tuesday, the Government made a concession on the Lords' Opposition amendment regarding permitted development and public houses. The amendment removed permitted development rights from pubs and ensured that any change of use or demolition of pubs in the future would require a planning application and allow for a local decision in all cases.

Pubs provide 1 million jobs and are worth £22 billion a year to the economy. Yet since 1980, 21,000 pubs have closed, and 21 pubs close every week. I am therefore pleased that the Government is acknowledging the role that pubs play in the local community.

## **Bus Services Bill (Report Stage and Third Reading)**

On Monday, the House of Commons considered the Bus Services Bill.

In the mid-1980s the Government deregulated the bus industry across Britain, except in London. Since then, fares have risen faster than inflation; bus use has fallen by more than a third; and bus market monopolies have become the norm. I therefore welcome that the Government appears to have reversed its historic policy towards the bus market with this Bill, which offers a step back from the problems created 30 years ago.

I believe local communities should have a much greater say over the operation of bus services in their area, and this Bill could go some way to re-regulating the bus industry. It gives mayoral combined authorities the ability to regulate their bus services, increasing parity between areas such as Greater Manchester and London. It provides local authorities with new partnership options for working alongside bus operators. I also welcome that the Bill gives the Government the power to require local buses to have audio-visual information systems in place.

The Bill is not perfect. I would have liked powers to re-regulate bus services to be available to all areas, not just mayoral combined authorities. I also supported a new clause which would have required the Government to publish a national strategy for buses, including consideration of a concessionary scheme for young people. I was disappointed that the Government voted against this clause and it was defeated.

I was further disappointed that the Government amended the Bill to include a clause banning local authorities from forming their own bus companies in the future.

I supported an amendment to remove this clause, which unfortunately did not pass.

## **Pensions Schemes Bill (Report Stage and Third Reading)**

On Wednesday, the House of Commons continued to consider the Pension Schemes Bill. Consideration of the Bill at Report Stage and Third Reading was postponed last week due to the London attacks.

The Pension Schemes Bill includes measures to regulate master trusts and to protect the interests of pension scheme members. It also includes regulations to override contractual terms in occupational pension schemes, with the intention of enabling full implementation of policies to restrict certain charges and fees relating to pension scheme members.

I support the measures in this Bill. However, I feel it is a missed opportunity to address our wider pensions crisis.

## **Northern Ireland: Political Developments Government Statement**

Monday was the deadline for political parties in Northern Ireland to form a government following the election there on 2 March.

On Tuesday, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland reported to the House of Commons that despite the efforts that had been made, there had been no agreement, and there was now therefore no devolved Administration.

I hope that every effort will be made to reach a deal as soon as possible. The process has to be built on partnership, genuine compromise and consensus if we are to build up faith and confidence not just in the institutions, but, much more importantly, across the whole population of Northern Ireland. I want this to succeed and believe all avenues should be used to reach that goal.

## **Personal Independence Payments: Regulations (Emergency Debate)**

On Wednesday, the House of Commons debated Personal Independence Payment (PIP) regulations. The request for an emergency debate had been made by my colleague the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary.

PIP helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability. Last year, two tribunals were held to challenge how strict PIP criteria are.

Both ruled in favour of changes that allow more people who need this support to be able to access it. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) said these changes would cost the Government £3.7 billion more by 2022.

Following these rulings, the Government rewrote its legislation to stop these changes from happening.

The Government's analysis estimates that this will affect more than 160,000 people, the majority of whom have mental health conditions and will not be able to access the full support that they would have been entitled to under the tribunals' rulings.

The Government has been forced to table a motion which will be voted on after Easter.

## **Whitley Bay Jobcentre Petition**

Thanks to those who have already signed my petition against the proposed closure of Whitley Bay Jobcentre.

I will be handing the petition to parliament after the Easter Recess so if you haven't already done so please take a moment to sign it at;

[http://www.alancampbellmp.co.uk/whitley\\_bay\\_jobcentre](http://www.alancampbellmp.co.uk/whitley_bay_jobcentre)

## **Legislating for UK Withdrawal from the EU Government Statement**

On Thursday, the Government published a White Paper about its proposed Great Repeal Bill and the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU made a statement in the House of Commons.

The paper sets out three elements to the Great Repeal Bill. Firstly, it would repeal the European Communities Act 1972 on the day we leave the EU, ending the supremacy of EU law in the UK. Secondly, it intends to convert EU law into UK law, making sure rules do not change overnight and allowing Parliament and devolved legislatures to amend, repeal or improve these laws in the future. Thirdly, the Bill would create powers allowing the Government to amend laws that it determines would not operate appropriately once we have left the EU. The Secretary of State explained in his statement that he believes the Bill will help to ensure certainty and stability.

While the text of the Bill has not yet been published, I have initial concerns that the White Paper does not detail any enhanced safeguards for the proposed sweeping use of Government powers.

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