

Letter to Brexit Secretary about the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB)

Dear Stephen

I understand the government is considering putting the Withdrawal Agreement Bill to the Commons for a vote on the principles of the Bill following a Second Reading debate. Indeed we were all told to be ready to answer a 3 line whip for this purpose on Thursday, only for this to be postponed.

I understand this is a long and complex piece of constitutional legislation which will require careful study by all those asked to improve or approve it. I would therefore urge you again to publish this Bill as soon as possible so MPs can have an intelligent debate about what it is seeking to do and how it might try to do that. Why the delay in releasing a piece of legislation for scrutiny which the government claims is so important. It must have been drafted for some time, as the draft Agreement it seeks to implement has been settled for many weeks and is not subject to renegotiation according to both the government and the EU.

The legislation presumably seeks to repeal much of the EU Withdrawal Act and will reintroduce the European Communities Act 1972 into the UK constitution to restore all EU powers for a flexible and long transitional period and maybe beyond that. It needs to make provision for the substantial sums of money the draft Agreement commits the UK to pay and for the imposition of new EU law upon the UK. It needs to confirm the powers of the Joint Committee and European Court of Justice in making important decisions about our future government and resolving disputes between the UK and the EU. These are all weighty matters which warrant proper consideration by MPs before any debate and vote on them.

The Bill could be more accurately called the "Delay our exit from the EU " Bill, or " The Reimposition of EU powers "Bill given the requirements of the draft Withdrawal Treaty. The Bill itself would of course need to conform precisely with the Treaty, as the Treaty will be binding in European law anyway.

Yours ever

John