

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.

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 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.

[News story: Minister Ellwood offers condolences after UN deaths in DRC](#)

I am deeply saddened and shocked by the news of the discovery of the bodies of two UN Group of Experts members in DRC. I would like to express my profound condolences to their families, colleagues, and friends. The UN Group of Experts are held in high esteem and their research into conflict and insecurity in DRC is vital in our attempts to hold to account those committing serious human rights abuses and violations.

The UK calls for a full investigation into their deaths. We will continue to underline to the Government of the DRC its responsibility for the Group of Experts' security and the need for its full cooperation with them.

[Speech: Minister Ellwood's speech at UK-Angola Trade and Investment Forum](#)

Speaking at the UK-Angola Trade and Investment Forum, Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Africa, said:

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here today. As I looked down the delegate list and saw a company called the Tea Club, I knew that Angola was

a country that could do business with the UK.

There is a huge overlap between what Angola needs and what we have in this country that we want to share.

Change and Opportunity

Change is on the horizon for both our countries.

This summer Angola is expected to experience its first change in leadership in almost 40 years.

And tomorrow, the Prime Minister Theresa May will formally begin the process of withdrawing from the European Union.

Change brings with it opportunities.

Angola has the opportunity to set an example to the region by ensuring a peaceful and democratic political transition.

Our departure from the European Union offers us the opportunity to become a truly Global Britain – strengthening our partnerships across the world, including with Angola.

Strengthening Links with Angola

We made a first step towards that goal last year, when our two governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen our political, economic and commercial relationship.

We have plans in the pipeline for a number of further agreements in specific areas, like finance.

Our commitment to growing our links with Angola is illustrated by the fact we have a dedicated Trade Envoy – Baroness Northover.

Baroness, can I thank you for the work you're doing.

You have paid four visits to Angola in the last 12 months alone, developing important relationships with Angola's economic ministries and identifying excellent opportunities for UK companies.

Personal Impressions of Angola

For my part, I certainly saw some of those opportunities for myself when I visited Angola last month.

There was encouraging evidence that the economy is beginning to strengthen and that the right investment conditions are beginning to be put in place.

The government explained their plans to diversify the economy and improve the business environment.

I heard how Angola was ready to embrace international partners – both Governments and businesses.

And I was told there was a particular need for foreign expertise in the energy, agriculture and infrastructure sectors, all sectors where the UK is well-placed to offer support.

We also have world leading expertise in financial services which can help a government spread the burden of new investment.

The situation in Angola

For those unfamiliar with Angola, let me give you a few impressions.

It is sub-Saharan Africa's third largest economy, worth £85 billion. It is still heavily dependent on oil exports, and it suffered heavily because of the fall in oil prices.

But it has great potential: it is politically stable, it has a favourable climate; huge non-mineral resources; vast areas of under-utilised arable land; and a young population of over 24 million people.

And possibly most importantly, it has a government which has an economic vision that welcomes foreign investment.

It wants to exploit both its traditional energy reserves and its huge potential in renewables, including hydro.

By 2025 the electricity grid will double to provide for nearly two thirds of the population.

The Angolan government is giving thought to how it builds its manufacturing base, and is taking steps to improve the business environment.

UK Government trade support

For all these reasons, the UK Government is boosting our support for British companies seeking to invest in Angola.

We have increased UK Export Finance limits for trade with Angola by

50%, from £500 million to £750 million.

This additional quarter of a billion pounds will help UK companies win new export contracts, and will give Angolan buyers access to UK finance.

Conclusion

Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Today is your chance to learn more about the opportunities on offer in Angola's dynamic market and how the Angolan Government intends to improve the climate for business there.

It is a chance for Angolan interests to team up with UK expertise.

Our Ambassador and his team – and our Trade Envoy -are on hand to give detailed advice about doing business in Angola.

I very much look forward to working with you to strengthen the partnership between our two countries.

This is an exciting time for both Britain and Angola.

Further information

[Statement to Parliament: Dartford-Thurrock Crossing charging scheme](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Publication of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing charging scheme account for 2015 to 2016.