

## The Commons votes

Yesterday the Commons voted down the Grieve and Cooper amendments to the government's neutral motion. The Grieve amendment would have given Parliamentary time for a series of debates and votes on indicative approaches to Brexit, seeking to pre-empt or direct the role of government to propose, amend or pass legislation and pursue policies of its design. The Cooper amendment would have given Parliamentary time to enact a delay in Brexit, amending the EU Withdrawal Act, against the government's wishes. These amendments were rejected by 20 and 23 votes respectively, more than the government's majority.

The Commons also passed the Spelman amendment by 8 votes. This amendment to the motion expresses the opinion that we should not leave without an agreement, but it does not overturn the legislation already passed for us to leave on 29 March. The government opposed it, in part because any suggestion we will not leave without a deal undermines the UK bargaining position.

The Brady amendment also passed requiring the government to go back to Brussels to seek to remove the Irish backstop from the draft Withdrawal Agreement. The government to win over more Conservatives to this measure promised that they will seek a rewrite of the legal text of the agreement on the backstop, when they had previously indicated they would just be seeking a protocol which would have been too weak. The PM also promised she will strengthen the official negotiating team and will take seriously the Malthouse compromise about the future negotiations and possible settlement. As someone who objects to more than just the backstop in the draft Agreement I was unable to support a motion which said I would support the Withdrawal Agreement after changes to the backstop. I do support the part of the Malthouse approach which seeks a managed no deal Brexit with talks about a comprehensive free trade agreement and use of the Article 24 of the GATT whilst in talks about such a proposal. I do not agree with more delay or payments to the EU after March. It is difficult to see what we might be able to agree after March that we have been. unable to agree over the previous 33 months. If the EU agreed this removes the need for any tariffs or new barriers to UK/EU trade.