

Luke Pollard MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Hello Plymouth,

31 October 2019

Before Parliament dissolves for the General Election, I wanted to give you an update on where we are with Brexit. With the exception of animal welfare, I have received more emails about Brexit in the past two and a half years than anything else. I want to thank you for sharing your views with me, asking questions and engaging with me on how I should vote.

Brexit is a mess. Our country is weaker and more divided than ever. Any form of Brexit risks closing off opportunities for our young people and making our economy smaller. We are already seeing the negative economic impacts of Brexit - with companies closing and relocating out of the UK.

In 2017 I said I would not vote to make Plymouth poorer. I stand by that promise today. I have not voted for cuts. I have made the case for all of us in Plymouth to get our fair share. I have also been clear that any Brexit deal must not make the people I represent worse off. I would have liked us to get there sooner, but I am pleased that the Leadership has listened, and we are now in the right place of promising to give the people a final say on any Brexit deal.

Although there are many different views on Brexit among the people I represent, there was near unanimity at my Brexit open public meetings on voting against Theresa May's deal. I did that three times because I was encouraged to do so by remain and leave voters alike, but also because it was a bad deal for Plymouth and a bad deal for

Plymouth Sutton and Devonport
luke.pollard.mp@parliament.uk
www.lukepollard.org
@lukepollard

Plymouth: 01752 717255 Westminster: 020 7219 2749

our country. It also risked constitutional chaos over the future status of Northern Ireland. The deal, as you will know, was defeated.

I then voted for different Brexit options - I have actually voted for more Brexit options than some in Boris Johnson's own cabinet today. I favoured EEA and customs union options and voted for options that would have reduced the economic damage Brexit will bring. Sadly, none of those choices won a majority. I was annoyed that the method of voting meant it was very unlikely to find a majority. It should have been done with the intention to find options that a consensus could have been built around. Sadly, that did not happen.

In 2016 the Leave campaign said we would leave with a deal, not without one. In 2017, I was elected on a manifesto of opposing no deal. Since then, I have consistently argued against the worst of all Brexit options – leaving without a deal. I know there are some who would prefer this, but I cannot reconcile the considerable, lasting and severe damage to our city's economy and to the livelihoods of the people I represent with supporting this option. I have voted against no-deal at every opportunity and I have publicly made the case that we have to avoid this option.

That brings us to today and Boris Johnson's deal. It takes a long time to properly read and understand all these Brexit deals. Boris Johnson's deal, like Theresa May's deal, runs to hundreds of pages of dense legal text. As is my duty, I have taken the time to read both, and the deal currently on the table is worse than Theresa May's deal. It is a harder Brexit that risks jobs losses and will cause more uncertainty. I mentioned above my concerns about the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland, and the deal the Government currently proposes would see a new customs and regulatory border between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. You may have heard the phrase that it is "down the Irish Sea" but thanks to investigations by me and my office, working with the DUP (which is not something I normally do), we have discovered that this border is actually at the coast of



Northern Ireland. This means that Northern Ireland has lost control of its own territorial waters – so much for taking back control.

I could not vote for Boris Johnson's deal. I made clear that I would support it if the deal was put back to the British people for you to have the final say on Brexit. I want to get Brexit sorted so we can get onto fixing Britain. The only way to do that is for the British people to have the final say via a new public vote. I am pleased my party is proposing a confirmatory vote on Brexit within six months of the election so we can put Brexit to bed.

Brexit has made our country more divided. It has pitted generations against each other and divided families. It has reduced our political debate to a polarised shouting match, where the evidence and estimates of consequences have been ignored. I think it has brought out the very worst in our country and I want to see it resolved and done so swiftly. As MPs have shown we cannot agree on a way forward, the only genuine option is a public vote. I do not believe a General Election will resolve Brexit. In a General Election people will vote on a range of issues – including Brexit – but also the crisis in our NHS, the crisis in our social care, the climate emergency and the lack of affordable housing to name a few.

Boris Johnson promised we would leave on 31 October and that has proven to be wrong. Every day that goes by with Brexit in the headlines, the more and more pressing issues facing Plymouth and communities around the country are ignored by Ministers. Passing a bad deal will not sort Brexit, it will only move us onto the next stage of Brexit. I fear that leaving the EU without a deal remains the plan at the end of the trade negotiations in 2020 and I fear some politicians are not being honest with their electorate about what lies ahead.

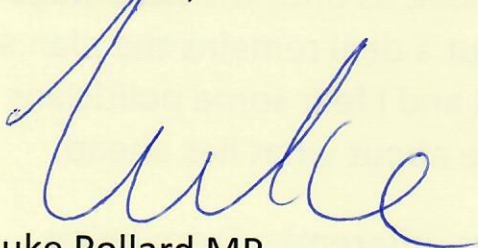
I promised in 2017 that I would do politics differently. From being the first Plymouth MP to open a walk up office in the city centre, to my weekly Facebook Live broadcasts, to my monthly open public

'town hall' style meetings, to my ten open Brexit meetings attended by over 1,500 people, I have always valued openness and transparency. In all those meetings I've tried to explain the realities of Brexit, and listen to the wide range of view that exist in Plymouth on Brexit. I've heard from hard remainers and those wanting more integration, to those wanting to revoke, those wanting to delay, those wanting a customs union and single market membership, those wanting us to join the EEA, those wanting Theresa May's deal (although not many of them), those wanting Boris Johnson's deal (a few more but not many), those wanting no deal, those wanting a public vote and more options besides. But perhaps the largest group remains those who want Brexit to be sorted one way or another. The only way to do that is with a specific vote – in a public vote – where the deal on the table is put against remain and you the people have the final say.

I am not certain what will happen in the coming General Election so I wanted to send an update so you know where we have got up to. I hope that Brexit can be resolved soon as I fear for the consequences for our city and our politics if this division is allowed and encouraged further. I want to thank everyone who has supported me and my office through the recent spate of vandalism but also over the past two and a half years. It has been a real privilege to represent the city where I was born and where I live.

During a General Election, I stop being an MP and am unable to take up new casework or policy issues. I hope to speak to many of you on the doors during the election but please keep in touch.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Luke', written in a cursive style.

Luke Pollard MP

Member of Parliament for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport