

## Parliament's next steps on Brexit <sup>[1]</sup>



### What votes have already taken place on Brexit? <sup>[2]</sup>

In December, the Prime Minister tabled a motion to approve the [Withdrawal Agreement](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and [Political Declaration on the Framework](#) <sup>[4]</sup> for the future UK-EU relationship. This was the process required under the [EU Withdrawal Act](#) <sup>[5]</sup> for Parliament to have a 'meaningful vote' <sup>[6]</sup> before the Government could introduce the bill to implement the agreement and ratify the treaty. After four days of debate, the Prime Minister suspended the debate, recognising that she would face defeat.

The debate resumed on 9 January, and on 15 January the House of Commons voted against the Prime Minister's Brexit deal by 432 votes to 202.

[Section 13](#) <sup>[7]</sup> of the EU Withdrawal Act required the Government to make a statement to Parliament setting out its next steps, which the Prime Minister made on 21 January. The Government then moved a motion 'in neutral terms' in the Commons which said that the House "has considered" the Prime Minister's statement. MPs would not usually be able to amend a motion in neutral terms but due to an amendment passed before Christmas all motions under the EU Withdrawal Act are now amendable. On 29 January the MPs passed two amendments to this motion. The first was a vote against leaving the EU without a deal which, although a clear expression of political will, does not change the legal default. The second was a vote in favour of the Prime Minister's deal provided "alternative arrangements" can be found for the [Irish backstop](#) <sup>[8]</sup>.

### When will Parliament vote next on Brexit? <sup>[9]</sup>

During the debate on 29 January, the Prime Minister committed to making another statement, which she did on 12 February, to be debated, alongside a motion, on 14 February. In [this statement](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, she told MPs that the Government would continue holding talks in Brussels to address the concerns that MPs had raised about the Irish backstop. She also told the House that she would either hold another 'meaningful vote' by 26 February on the deal or make another statement on that date and move another motion which the House could debate and amend on 27 February. Her aim appears to have been to prevent further rebellions in favour of Parliament taking control of the Brexit process.

On 14 February, Parliament voted on a motion which says that the House 'welcomes' the Prime Minister's statement, 'reiterates' its support for the approach to leaving the EU that MPs voted for on 29 January (so against no deal and with alternative arrangements to the backstop), and 'notes' that conversations with the EU are ongoing.

MPs rejected the Government's motion by 303 to 258 votes.

### What were the results of the amendments selected on the 14 February vote? <sup>[11]</sup>

Which amendment	
(a)	

Who has tabled the amendment?  
Labour frontbench

What does it say?  
It replaces the text of the motion and requires a Minister to either hold a meaningful vote by 27 February or make a statement saying there is no agreement in principle with the EU and move an amendable motion on how the Government plans to proceed.

**Result** Rejected 306 - 322

**(i)**

**Who has tabled the amendment?** Ian Blackford, SNP Westminster leader

**What does it say?** It replaces the text of the motion to require the Government to begin negotiations with the EU over an Article 50 extension by at least three months and bring forward an amendment to the EU Withdrawal Act (which includes the date of exit on the face of the bill) to reflect this.

**Result** Rejected 315 - 93

**(e)**

**Who has tabled the amendment?** Anna Soubry, Conservative MP

**What does it say?** It replaces the text of the motion and instructs the Government to publish within seven days the most recent official briefing document presented to cabinet on the implications of a no deal Brexit for business and trade.

**Result** Withdrawn

Which amendment	Who has tabled the amendment?	What does it say?	Result
(a)	Labour frontbench	It replaces the text of the motion and requires a Minister to either hold a meaningful vote by 27 February or make a statement saying there is no agreement in principle with the EU and move an amendable motion on how the Government plans to proceed.	Rejected 306 - 322
(i)	Ian Blackford, SNP Westminster leader	It replaces the text of the motion to require the Government to begin negotiations with the EU over an Article 50 extension by at least three months and bring forward an amendment to the EU Withdrawal Act (which includes the date of exit on the face of the bill) to reflect this.	Rejected 315 - 93
		It replaces the text of the motion and instructs the Government to publish within seven days the most recent	

(e) Which amendment	Anna Soubry, <b>Who has tabled the amendment?</b>	official briefing document presented to cabinet on the implications of a no deal trade. <b>What does it say?</b>	Withdrawn <b>Result</b>
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Whatever happens on 14 February, if the Government wants to ratify a withdrawal agreement then the Commons will still need to approve it in another ‘[meaningful vote](#)’<sup>[6]</sup> as well as – along with the Lords – pass the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill. This vote must take place by 29 March, the date of the UK’s scheduled departure from the EU.

### **Why are Yvette Cooper and allies not tabling their amendment now?**<sup>[12]</sup>

One of the key amendments on 29 January, which was rejected by a majority of 23, was tabled by Labour MP Yvette Cooper and supported by a group of cross-party MPs. Its purpose was to find time to debate a bill in the House of Commons which would ultimately require the Prime Minister to seek an extension of Article 50 if Parliament had not approved a deal by a certain date. This group have [already announced](#)<sup>[13]</sup> that they will not be tabling a similar amendment this time, but instead will wait to table their amendment until 26 February – suggesting the Prime Minister’s time-buying tactic has worked.

The new approach involves a slightly different bill, [which they have published](#).<sup>[14]</sup> It says that if Parliament hasn’t approved a deal by 13 March, the Prime Minister must choose to either move a motion which says that the House approves leaving the EU without a deal, or a motion which says that the House agrees to the Prime Minister seeking an extension of Article 50. If the Prime Minister chooses the first, and it is voted down, she must then move the second.

The Cooper amendment lost by 23 votes on 29 January – so its prospects of success depend on winning over MPs who voted against it or abstained last time. The Labour front bench has again said it would support it. Dame Caroline Spelman, Conservative MP, who abstained on the amendment on 29 January, is now a signatory to the bill.

#### **Update date:**

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- [1] <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/parliament-next-steps-brexit>
- [2] <http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=What%20votes%20have%20already%20taken%20place%20on%20Brexit%3F>
- [3] <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/draft-brexit-withdrawal-agreement-november>
- [4] <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/framework-uk-eu-future-relationship>
- [5] <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/eu-withdrawal-act>
- [6] <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/parliament-meaningful-vote-brexit>
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- [9] <http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=When%20will%20Parliament%20vote%20next%20on%20Brexit%3F>
- [10] [https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-on-brexit-12-february-2019?utm\\_source=5ac17863-416a-4fd3-98fe-ea03814b7328&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-on-brexit-12-february-2019?utm_source=5ac17863-416a-4fd3-98fe-ea03814b7328&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)
- [11] <http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=What%20amendments%20have%20been%20tabled%20ahead%20of%20the%202014%20February%20vote%3F>
- [12] <http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=Why%20are%20Yvette%20Cooper%20and%20allies%20not%20tabling%20their%20amendment%20now%3F%0A>
- [13] <https://twitter.com/YvetteCooperMP/status/1095394149120073730>
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