



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd February, 2016

Dear Elector,

The European Referendum

Whether we should remain in Europe or leave has cast a shadow over our politics for more than three decades. It has long been the case that the European question needed to be settled one way or the other. This is why I have always supported having an in or out referendum. I am glad this referendum is now going to take place on June 23rd.

Many have written to me asking how I intend to cast my vote. It is right that my constituents should be the first to know my current thinking on this referendum. I have always felt there are practical concerns with the European project. Yet I have always taken a pragmatic and hard headed view about what is best for Dover & Deal - and for Britain. I have read through every word of the agreement struck at the European Council by the Prime Minister. I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons. And I met with the Home Secretary this week to discuss what this means for Dover & Deal. I have considered deeply the implications for our community as regards jobs and prosperity, border security and national security.

Jobs and Prosperity

There is no doubt that the Eurozone has been managed very poorly. The anaemic growth of the Eurozone countries is shameful. In the Eurozone, unemployment has risen in many nations. Young people have paid the highest price for this economic failure.

Yet we are not in the Eurozone. So we have been able to grow. In fact we've had the strongest growth of all major advanced economies. We have enjoyed a jobs revolution. Here in Dover & Deal youth unemployment has fallen over 50% since 2010. This is because we have an economic plan that is delivering security and opportunity for Britain - and a plan that is providing more life chances for our young people.

Therefore it is essential that the Eurozone cannot subject us to their economic policies. It had been feared they might try - in particular to make us pay for Eurozone bail outs or seek to attack the City of London and our banking system. The Prime Minister's agreement has secured a binding commitment that the Eurozone will not do those things.

The European Union is a huge customs union. If we left we would be subject to tariffs. As we import more goods than we export we would arguably be net beneficiaries. Yet any trade barriers will have the effect of reducing trade. The nature of the single market is that it would be easy to make it harder for us to export to Europe.

Member of Parliament for Dover & Deal



If we were to leave there are two important questions to consider. First, would the Eurozone renew their attempts to discriminate against the City of London and our banking system? Second, would Europe make it harder for us to trade in the single market and would we be able to increase trade with the rest of the World to offset any problems we might have with the single market?

Border security

A key concern for our community is border security. Just over a decade ago, Dover suffered hugely as migrants were able to get to Britain before they encountered effective border controls. This situation caused much concern in our community as there were so many migrants in Dover. Things changed when an agreement was made with France that the UK border should move to Calais. This was the Le Touquet Treaty of 2003. Juxtaposed controls were set up so that UK and French border posts were maintained at both Dover and Calais. This means that UK border officers are able to stop migrants at Calais and hand them over to the French authorities.

As a result the overwhelming majority of migrants seeking to get to the UK are stuck in France. There they scheme with people traffickers to break into Britain. In almost every case their designs are thwarted by eagle eyed border officers, vigilant ships that patrol the English Channel and a crack squad of highly trained dogs that sniff out people hiding in the fruit and veg.

Moving the border back to Dover would be a disaster. That is why I have always been a passionate defender of the juxtaposed controls. Having our border at Calais ensures that we do not have the problems in Dover we had over a decade ago.

Meanwhile the people of the Calais region are appalled by The Jungle at Calais. Daily they demand of the French government that the treaty should be torn up. They clamour to see The Jungle moved to our side of the Channel. If we were to leave Europe, what incentive would there be for the French to maintain our border in Calais? And might they cancel the treaty even were we to remain?

National security

Our community served as the front line in the First and Second World Wars. It was from here that our beleaguered army was rescued from Dunkirk. Under these very skies was the Battle of Britain fought. Those conflicts taught us that only if we stood with our allies could we maintain peace. Out of those events was the European Union forged. So too the international system for keeping peace in the World.

The international system has served us well for many years. Yet now it is under grave threat. Russia has invaded Ukraine and now threatens Turkey. Syria has succumbed to a humanitarian tragedy, and the wider instability in the Middle East has bred Islamic Terror and ISIS. Meanwhile on the other side of the World, Chinese expansionism threatens Japan and South East Asia.



We need not only to maintain but to reinforce the international system. We must also urgently strengthen the power and resolve of the West. If we were to vote to leave Europe, a key question is whether global peace and stability - and our part in it - would be stronger or weakened. So too is how Russia would react and whether they would see our leaving as a lack of commitment to security in Europe. We would also have to consider how our ability to help secure renewed peace and stability in the Middle East and around the World be affected.

Conclusion

The European Union is far from perfect. Yet within it we are still able to grow strongly and benefit from the customs union, as our economic record shows. We benefit from greater certainty as regards border security. For sure the French could cancel the treaty at any time, yet the risk they would do so is far greater were we to leave Europe. Finally, within Europe, no-one will doubt our commitment to the security of the European continent.

Were we to resolve to leave, we may very well continue to enjoy economic success. We might persuade the French that they would prefer to keep our border at Calais. We could even persuade President Putin of our continued commitment to the security of Europe. Yet there is great risk in all these matters. It is for these reasons that I currently intend to vote to stay in the European Union.

In this referendum, I have just one vote out of over 70,000 in this constituency. Everyone will have an equal say on polling day, June 23rd. Everyone should listen to the cases put forward by the Remain and Leave campaigns and make up their own minds. It's your vote and your future. You should cast your vote for the future you believe in.

Yours faithfully

Charlie Elphicke MP