

# All Edinburgh MPs vote against Brexit bill



Edinburgh Members of Parliament have been unanimous in their opposition to the Brexit bill otherwise known more formally as the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill.

The bill was approved by Westminster on 1 February by a large majority in favour of the government's position, and will now move forward to the next stage in the House of Commons. This completed two days of debate on the bill with an amendment lodged by the SNP to deal with too. The amendment fell, but all of the city's MPs were for once singing from the same hymn sheet.

MP for Edinburgh South, Ian Murray said during the debate: "At the end of the EU referendum campaign, 78% of my constituents voted to remain. Many Members from across the Chamber in the last day or so have talked about not respecting the democratic will of the people, but, as far as I am concerned and according to "Erskine May", we are representatives of our constituents.

"None of these decisions in the House is taken easily; in fact, it is with a heavy heart that I will vote against triggering article 50 this evening, but I will do so in the knowledge that I will be able to walk down the streets of Edinburgh South, look my constituents in the eye and say to them that I have done everything I possibly can to protect their jobs, their livelihoods and the future of their families."

Michelle Thomson sits in the House of Commons as an Independent MP. She said: "There has been a lot of Sturm und Drang around this debate over the past couple of days. I will

try to reflect how I feel about it. I have a sense of disbelief and despair at the decision that is about to be made, and significant doubt in the abilities of those who seek to give voice to my constituents in going any way towards meeting their needs. Let us be clear: 71% of my constituents in Edinburgh West voted to remain.

“The Scottish National Party’s reasoned amendment is backed by many of my constituents, the vast majority of whom voted against independence in our independence referendum and many of whom are not SNP supporters. To a man and to a woman, they are writing to me, saying, “If this goes ahead, I am firmly in favour of taking the next steps to protect my business, my child who wants to go through Erasmus, and my ability to travel, work and live freely within Europe.” How strongly we feel about the matter in Scotland—for those in and without the SNP—is fundamental.

“This is not just about economics, although stepping away from that matter is, incidentally, a vast collective madness. The philosophy of Europe as a unifier to protect against the sort of madness and rhetoric we hear from Trump—racist, misogynistic and protectionist—is a fundamental for me. So, yes, I feel disbelief. With every breath in my body, I am going to ensure that Scotland can continue to access the single market.”

Edinburgh South West’s MP is Joanna Cherry QC MP waited till 4.30pm on the second day to have her say. She said : “Tonight we shall vote on an SNP amendment, and I welcome the support from other Members for that amendment. The amendment is, in part, designed to ensure that the Conservative party delivers on promises made by politicians to the people of Scotland during the 2014 independence referendum—promises made by Ruth Davidson, such as the idea that voting to remain in the United Kingdom was a guarantee of our EU citizenship; and promises made that Scotland is an equal partner in the Union.□

Listening to yesterday's debate, one could be forgiven for thinking that Scotland is seen as an unwelcome distraction from the main event. The message seems to be, "Get back in your box, and know your place". Gone are the lovebombs, which have been replaced with instructions to "Sit down, shut up and put up with it.

"The EU referendum did not take place in a void in Scotland, separated from what has gone before. In 2014, the question of Scotland's future membership of the European Union was central to the independence referendum. The SNP, and the wider "yes" campaign, warned that a "no" vote would be a threat to Scotland's ancient trade links, about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) spoke so eloquently earlier. We said that voting to remain in the United Kingdom was a threat to our membership of Europe because of Tory Euroscepticism."

Edinburgh North and Leith is represented by Deidre Brock MP who had this to say: "A Government who were confident in what they were doing and confident that they were pursuing the right ends would have had no difficulty in engaging with Parliament.

"In fact, they would have welcomed the opportunity. What we saw instead was a Government and a Prime Minister hiding from Parliament and the democratic processes on which good governance is built. They were forced into coming to the House and doing the right thing only because they were dragged before the courts, defeated, and defeated again by campaigners holding up the principle of parliamentary democracy as something to which the Government should bow.

"I, too, would like to take this opportunity to thank those democracy campaigners—I single out Gina Miller in particular—for their contribution, which, as I have mentioned before, will have long-lasting effects on this and other issues.□

“This Bill—these few paragraphs, this poor excuse for legislation—has been wrung out of the Government, and its brevity is childish and disrespectful to this place, the courts and the people whose representatives come here on their behalf. The Government should be ashamed of themselves.

“The suggestion is that no preparation was done by the Government in advance of the Court judgment—not even when the judgment was going back to appeal without much hope of success. That would smack of the same kind of arrogant laziness that marked the approach of David Cameron’s Government to the referendum.

“There was no preparation; they just winged it and hoped. After hearing Members from the Government Benches, I am shocked that they do not think that the people should be entitled to know what the plan is. People like to mention the independence referendum very often: in Scotland, we debated the details for two years. In this place, the Government still do not what the details are two months before kick-off.”

Tommy Sheppard MP for Edinburgh East said: “One of the more bizarre aspects of the discussion that has taken place since the referendum is the way in which the people who won the referendum have tried to explain what it means by reference to the arguments of those who lost the referendum.

“Thus we are told that, even though it was not on the ballot paper, the vote is a vote to leave the single European market because [David Cameron](#) suggested that it might be. I did hear David Cameron suggest that, but I also heard the leave campaign accuse him of hyperbole and mendacity every time he did so, and say that it was not true.”