

# Prime Minister's Brexit statement

The Prime Minister Theresa May addressed the media outside Downing Street this evening after a five hour Cabinet meeting. This is what she said :

“The Cabinet has just had a long, detailed and impassioned debate on the draft Withdrawal Agreement and the Outline Political Declaration on our future relationship with the European Union.

“These documents were the result of thousands of hours of hard negotiation by UK officials, and many, many meetings, which I and other ministers held with our EU counterparts.

“I firmly believe that the draft Withdrawal Agreement was the best that could be negotiated, and it was for the Cabinet to decide whether to move on in the talks.

“The choices before us were difficult, particularly in relation to the Northern Ireland backstop.

“But the collective decision of Cabinet was that the Government should agree the draft Withdrawal Agreement and the Outline Political Declaration – this is a decisive step which enables us to move on and finalise the deal in the days ahead.

“These decisions were not taken lightly – but I believe it is a decision that is firmly in the national interest.

“When you strip away the detail, the choice before us is clear. This deal which delivers on the vote of the referendum, which brings back control of our money, laws and borders; ends free movement; protects jobs, security and our union; or leave with no deal; or no Brexit at all.

“I know that there will be difficult days ahead. This is a

decision which will come under intense scrutiny and that is entirely as it should be and entirely understandable.

“But the choice was this deal, which enables us to take back control and to build a brighter future for our country, or going back to square one with more division, more uncertainty and a failure to deliver on the referendum.

“It is my job as Prime Minister to explain the decisions that the Government has taken and I stand ready to do that beginning tomorrow with a statement in Parliament.

“If I may end by just saying this. I believe that what I owe to this country is to take decisions that are in the national interest, and I firmly believe with my head and my heart that this is a decision which is in the best interests of our entire United Kingdom.”

## **RESPONSES**

The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon tweeted after 10.00pm : “Not long off call with PM. She tried to tell me Scotland’s ‘distinctive’ interests had been protected. I pointed out that there isn’t a single mention of Scotland in the agreement, that it disregards our interests, and puts Scotland at a serious competitive disadvantage.”

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie said: “This Conservative Government is in total chaos. The veneer of unity in the cabinet will not secure unity in the country, parliament or even their own party.

“This deal will not satisfy anyone regardless of whether they voted leave or remain. Instead Brexit will hurt the pockets of ordinary people and leave the UK weakened.

“Theresa May has a chance to steer the UK away from the cliff edge. She should call a People’s Vote and give the public the

power to choose what happens next.”

The campaign Scotland for a People’s Vote have called the Brexit plan [‘half-baked’](#).

Scottish Greens co-convener Patrick Harvie MSP said: “After months of build-up, Theresa May has returned triumphant with this damp squib of a deal. The one thing we can be sure of is that this won’t be implemented as it stands, such is the act of self-harm it would represent.

“This deal will make almost everyone unhappy – the hard right Brextremist wing of the Tories, and their Remain supporters too; the arch unionists of the DUP and the independence movement in Scotland; some in Labour want an election and others want a People’s Vote, but almost none of them will back this. We’ve seen no Cabinet resignations yet, but plenty of long faces of those who are for the moment still putting their jobs ahead of the national interest.

“In short, everyone seems to hate this. Fortunately it’s not too late to stop the mess. If Parliament votes down this deal, it must lead to an opportunity for the public to have their say, and stick with the good deal with have as full members of the EU, with our rights and freedoms as EU citizens protected.”

*We will add more here as we get them*