

Letter from Westminster



Steve Brine MP

ONE of the key campaigns I ran in the last Parliament was my 'Name the Date' push for our promised European Union referendum, and we now know it will be held on Thursday June 23rd.

I have always maintained that our relationship with the European Union

is a decision everyone should be able to make with an equal vote and in November 2011, I voted against a three-line whip to say we should have this in/out referendum.

To be honest, it wasn't a great career move for a new MP, but this issue had to be gripped.

I have discussed this renegotiation with the Prime Minister David Cameron many times and, while I always felt his requests were certainly not overly ambitious, the 'Deal' he has secured is more significant than many felt possible.

In our Election Manifesto last year, we said we would get Britain out of 'ever closer union', make Europe more competitive, protect Britain as the Eurozone continues to integrate, and put an end to the something for nothing welfare culture for European Union migrants, and that is what the deal has done.

Additionally, we will never join the Euro, never join a European Army, and never be part of the Schengen agreement on passports.

Those who want to leave the EU cannot tell us if or when British businesses would be able to access Europe's free trade single market, if jobs are safe, or how much prices would rise, so to leave would seem a leap in the dark.

Equally, I think we will be safer in this reformed Europe and now is not the time to withdraw from the western alliance when Britain faces multiple threats from Vladimir Putin and Russia, cross border crime and international terrorism.

The truth is, the European Union needs us more than we need it right now and I believe we should make a positive choice to stay and, as I said to the Prime Minister in the House of Commons this week, continue our push to reform a 'one size fits all' organisation that is more suited to the 1970's than the future.

Of course, there are compromises to being part of any club and I am not pretending for one moment we don't give something away to gain something else, but we can have the best of both worlds.

I most definitely do not love Brussels. I want less Europe not more. But the question I have asked myself time and again in recent months is does that mean I want NO Europe?

Looking at the evidence available and the deal on the table, I have concluded, after huge thought and careful consideration that Britain's national interest is best served by us remaining a member of a reformed European Union.

Finally, there will be strongly held views expressed on both sides of the debate but there is far more that unites us than divides us as a party and a Government and please remember, all the other work of Government continues as usual regardless of how it may seem watching the television news right now.

You can see my full thoughts at www.stevebrine.com/2016EUReferendum and you can find more information about my wider work as your local MP online or through 01962 791110.

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Ford