

14<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Dear Constituents,

**RE: Outcome of the EU referendum**

I have been contacted by several hundred constituents following the EU referendum, many raising very similar points. So I hope you will forgive me for grouping my response to the issues raised into one letter.

As you will know, I voted for the UK to remain in the European Union. However, we had a national referendum which resulted in the majority of those voting, deciding that the UK should leave the European Union. Prior to 23<sup>rd</sup> June I made clear that I would respect the result of the referendum, whatever the outcome, and that is precisely what I intend to do. The new Prime Minister, Theresa May, has made clear that “Brexit means Brexit” and I share that view.

**Second referendum**

When campaigning on this issue over the past months I repeatedly said that the referendum was a once in a generation decision. I stand by that view, even though the result is not one I personally wanted or campaigned for.

It was a win for Leave and I believe that we all need to respect that. If it had been a narrow win for Remain there would no doubt also have been calls for a re-run which I would also have rejected. A second referendum would, in my view, cause further uncertainty which would not be welcome.

I am aware of a petition calling for a second referendum, seeking to impose a retrospective threshold for the turnout and result. However, as the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, made clear in his statement to the House of Commons on 27<sup>th</sup> June, the referendum was one of the biggest democratic exercises in British history with over 33 million people having their say. The Government was also clear before the referendum that this was a once in a generation vote. The rules of the referendum were fair and clear and seeking to change the rules after the referendum would severely undermine the democratic process.

Some have written to say that voters were misled by some of the messages coming from the Leave campaign. I have to say, many of us campaigning for the UK to Remain in the EU were robust in rebutting these messages and, as you may know, I sent many thousands of households in my constituency a detailed letter setting out my views on many of the issues being raised by both the Leave and Remain campaigns. There was certainly a lot of information available in the public domain, stating all the arguments for and against continued UK membership of the EU, and I do not think re-running the referendum on the basis of a lack of information is a valid argument.

**Follow Alok on Twitter: @AlokSharma\_RDG**

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### **Procedure for leaving the European Union**

The law is clear that the process for leaving the EU begins by invoking Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union. Once Article 50 is invoked, formal negotiations can start in order to set out the UK's future relationship with the EU. EU treaties will cease to apply to the UK once a withdrawal agreement enters into force. If no agreement is reached within two years, EU treaties will cease to apply and the UK will have no new settlement with the EU, unless all EU member states decide to extend the negotiation period.

Prime Minister Theresa May has stated there should be no decision to invoke Article 50 until the British negotiating strategy is agreed and clear – which means Article 50 should not be invoked before the end of this year.

In the meantime, and during the negotiations that will follow, there will be no change to people's rights to travel and work, and to the way our goods and services are traded, or to the way our economy and financial system is regulated.

### **EU citizens living in the UK**

With respect to the rights of EU citizens living in the United Kingdom, it may be useful for me to directly quote an extract from a Parliamentary debate on this issue on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016, made by James Brokenshire MP, the then Immigration Minister:

*"We [the Government] will look to secure a fair deal for EU citizens, as we secure a fair deal for British citizens in the EU. That is the responsible approach, and that is what we will do. We want to be able to guarantee the legal status of EU nationals who are living in the UK and I am confident we will be able to do just that. We must also win the same rights for British nationals living in European countries and it will be an early objective for the Government to achieve those things together. As the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have made clear and as I stated on Monday, there will in any event be no immediate changes in the circumstances of EU nationals in the UK. Currently, they can continue to enter and live in the UK as they have been doing."*

I believe the position set out by Mr Brokenshire is the right approach for the new government to take.

### **Hate crime**

With regards to a reported increase in xenophobic and racist attacks, the police have rightly said they will respond robustly and offenders can expect tough sentences for these crimes.

Locally we have always enjoyed very good community relations in Reading and I certainly hope this will continue. If you find yourself, or know of a family member or friend who has been, subjected to any kind of racism or connected offence please contact the police immediately. I would also be grateful if you would make me aware of any such incident to allow me to follow-up on behalf of any affected constituent.

### **Impact of EU referendum on Scotland**

On entering Downing Street, Prime Minister May said:

*"...the full title of my party is the Conservative and Unionist Party. And that word unionist is very important to me. It means we believe in the union, the precious, precious bond between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland."*

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## **Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West**

I am delighted that the new Prime Minister has reaffirmed so strongly her commitment to the union and the UK Government is absolutely committed to working closely with the Scottish Government in respect of the EU negotiation process.

The United Kingdom has fundamental strengths and this is a time for calmness and deliberation – not a time for pushing other personal or political agendas. A second independence referendum will not help us achieve the stability we now need, nor is it in the best interests of the people of Scotland. The arguments for Scotland remaining a part of the UK are compelling – in or out of the EU. The 1.6 million votes cast in this referendum in favour of remain in Scotland do not wipe away the 2 million votes cast less than two years ago in favour of remaining in the UK.

I hope that you find this information useful and thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**

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