

ANDREA LEADSOM MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th February 2016

Dear Residents,

With the Prime Minister's negotiation on reform of our relationship with the European Union concluded, I want my constituents to be the first to know my views ahead of the referendum on our continued membership. I believe with absolute conviction that it is in the UK's best interests to leave the EU.

In 2011 I co-founded the 'Fresh Start Project' to consider what membership of the EU means for our country and the impact that Brussels has on our daily lives. We proposed a wide range of reforms from trade and red tape to welfare and crime, and you can find all the analysis as well as our 'Mandate for Reform' at www.eufreshstart.org. I have spoken to thousands of people on the doorstep, at my advice surgeries and at public meetings in order to hear your views, and I have spoken in Parliament about the need for the EU to become more competitive, flexible and democratically accountable.

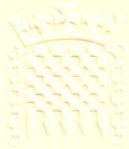
The simple truth is that the status quo is no longer an option:

- The EU's share of global economic activity is falling fast, from 30.9% in 1980 to a forecast of 16.7% by 2018, (according to the IMF). This takes the EU from being the largest trading bloc to being third behind the US and China;
- During this period the Euro currency has been adopted, and when combined with the unresolved crisis of too much debt and too little growth, it is clear that Euro members must now move ever closer together to defend their currency union (which will inevitably leave Britain side-lined);
- The migration crisis has already overwhelmed the willingness of many EU members to set aside national interests. Even when (as it must) an EU-wide plan is formed, the sheer scale of migration will change Europe forever.

The proposed reforms achieved by the Prime Minister have been hard won, but what is clear now is that the EU is not willing or able to accommodate our interests. Through determined negotiation the PM has succeeded in disapplying 'ever closer union' to the UK but this does not protect us from further EU integration. Both the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties make clear that the EU will continue down this path. It is a path that we cannot follow.

Now that 18 of the 28 member states have a shared currency, it is inevitable that they will move closer to full political and fiscal union. They need to align their banking and taxation systems, and to follow through with the European Public Prosecutor and unified policing that naturally follow the Schengen Agreement on open borders. We have a European Head of State (in fact we have seven, if you include the various different institutions of the European Union), an EU flag and even a Europe Day. The EU wants shared welfare, justice, banking, tax and defence policies to be centrally determined, whilst limiting the role of individual member states under a qualified majority voting system. This is simply not right for the United Kingdom.

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire



So what does it mean for us if we leave the EU? For me, it is about reclaiming our position as an island trading nation that has always had partners in every corner of the globe – from our historic links with Commonwealth nations to our friends across the Atlantic and to the emerging economies in the Asia-Pacific region. The EU's instincts are too often corporatist, protectionist and anti-competitive. Ours are pro trade, pro competition and outward looking. We must not tie ourselves to a single market, but seek all the global opportunities that would be open to us if once again we were able to negotiate our own trade arrangements.

And what does it mean if we stay? As the EU moves inevitably towards a 'United States' of Europe, the UK will increasingly go from a 'senior partner' with influence to a country whose views count for little in Brussels and yet whose parliament is increasingly subservient to EU legislation. I wholeheartedly believe in the primacy of our Westminster Parliament and we should not allow the continued erosion of our national sovereignty.

It is vital to deal with the uncertainty felt by some about what would happen following a vote to leave. Those who talk of immediate disastrous consequences are quite simply wrong – nothing will change immediately after the vote and any negotiation on the terms of Brexit will, under the EU's own rules set out in the Treaty of Rome, last for at least two years. Further, those who say that we will lose fundamental protections granted by EU law on a host of issues are also wrong. EU legislation is adopted under UK law and it would be up to the government of the day to decide which laws they would like to amend, keep or revoke.

Like many of you reading this, I am a parent. The question I ask myself is “what do I want for my children's future?” The UK is the world's fifth biggest economy, the best performing in Western Europe, and there is the expectation that we will soon leapfrog over Germany and Japan to climb the global league tables even further. We are an amazing island nation filled with inventiveness and creativity – one only has to think of the incredible achievements we had to celebrate during the wonderful opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games. We have superb natural advantages: the world's business language is English, our contract law is widely recognised as the gold standard, we have one of the least corrupt judicial systems in the world, we benefit hugely from living between the time zones of North America and Asia, and of course we have longstanding links to the near 2.5 billion people that make up the Commonwealth.

I want our children to grow up in a country that knows it always pays to work, where employers cannot take advantage of the unlimited cheap European workforce to suppress pay for UK workers and where we ourselves decide who can or cannot come and live in our country.

Most of all I want our children to grow up, raise their families and grow old in a country where they know that they can kick out a bad government and elect a new one every few years in the knowledge that their government can change things for the better without being tied to a Brussels bureaucracy.

Leaving the European Union does not mean leaving Europe. We have a longstanding relationship with Europe that predates any political institution. We will continue to work with, trade with, and yes at times disagree with Europe as we have always done – that will not change. I have no doubt a free trading arrangement with the EU can be negotiated – we



import more from the EU than we export to them which means it is in our mutual interest to maintain free trade. Whatever challenges may arise during that process, we must see them as a better alternative than all the compromises of our continued membership.

We will also continue to protect our national security interests – working with the EU on security matters as we do with other international organisations, keeping our deep seated support for NATO, our role as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the ultimate protection of our nuclear deterrent.

As you can imagine, this is not a decision I have taken lightly or quickly. I believe profoundly, however, that our future is so much brighter outside the European Union and that we will do so much better by setting our sights on the global stage.

I hope that every voter in South Northamptonshire will listen to the arguments on both sides before casting their ballot in the referendum. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to decide our place in the world. For the reasons I have set out in this letter, I will be voting to leave.

With very best wishes,

Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire