

## So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye

Written by Martin Banks on 5 March 2019 in Feature  
Feature

With the deadline for the UK's exit from the EU fast approaching, British MEPs have spoken of their regret about having to step down from elected office.



*Photo Credit: Press Association*

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Theresa Griffin's reaction is typical of most Labour MEPs, saying she is "concerned where the UK will be" after Britain exits the bloc.

In an exclusive interview with this website, she spoke of her sorrow at leaving, looked back on her time in Brussels and also to the future.

Griffin said, "I have believed in the peace project that is the European Union. And I still do. I became a Labour MEP in 2014 for the North West of England. This was a goal of mine and I had finally achieved it."

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"I have achieved many more, from ensuring women will not always be the worst hit when it comes to energy poverty, to holding the European Commission and Council to account over climate change targets."

"In fact, as soon as I came to the European Parliament I delved right in and was given shadow lead on a file on greenhouse gases."

She added, "Brexit is a threat to these ideals. That working together towards a common goal, to overcome an international hurdle, will not be a solution to Britain's obstacles any more."

Griffin added, "A highlight for me was receiving an MEP award for my work on Energy in the European Parliament in 2017. This was more than just recognition for my work. It was a testament to the time and dedication myself and my team put into ensuring Labour values were put into Energy legislation."

"Farewells and final fast tracks of legislating are on most MEPs' minds. We all want to say we contributed" **Theresa Griffin MEP**

"More than pushing for new legislation is making it work for the workers. You cannot have a transition to a new era of energy and say goodbye to those being left behind."

"That is why UK Labour MEPs alongside our S&D colleagues always argue for a Just Transition. A Just Transition that gets workers retrained before they lose their jobs, a Just Transition that funds new pathways for workers in the renewable energy fields, and a Just Transition that doesn't let people fall behind."

"Being left behind," she said, "I am concerned that is where the UK will be. Right now, fate will have us part. Hopefully not as a 'no-deal' parting, hopefully not at all. There are legacies from this parliamentary term that must be upheld. I have intervened many times on behalf of the UK Tyred Campaign since 2014."

"If there is a relevant report on tyres I have almost definitely spoken on it. Old tyres with no guarantee should not be allowed to be reused. It's a simple message, but if someone doesn't carry it..."

"This is a natural turning point 'fin de mandat' for the European Parliament. Farewells and final fast tracks of legislating are on most MEPs minds. We all want to say we contributed."

She went on, "When you think of memories of Brussels or Strasbourg. You think of the late nights,

working on files, waiting in meetings for your point, putting heads together with cross-party colleagues and you realise you will miss it all.”

“Most of all I will miss my colleagues, my team, the Parliament staff who I have got to know over the last almost 5 years and the sense of togetherness working in a Union such as this.”

“I am proud of the part Labour MEPs have and continue to play in the fight for tax justice, against zero hours contracts and for environmental protections” **Alex Mayer MEP**

Looking to the future, she said, “Ideally I will stay in representational politics, continuing to serve and be inspired by the people of the North West, securing investment, jobs and growth for my region and ensuring that it remains a leader on the European and world stage.”

Another Labour MEP Alex Mayer reflected on her time in Brussels, saying, “I thoroughly enjoy being an MEP and representing the people of the East of England. People at home sometimes assume everything I do is about Brexit - and while in the UK this does dominate life - in the Parliament of course I get to work on a huge variety of topics.”

“I am proud of the part Labour MEPs have and continue to play in the fight for tax justice, against zero hours contracts and for environmental protections. As to the future, I really don't know yet.

“In fact, I'm open to offers! It is the question I am certainly asked the most, but for the time being I'll focus on trying to ensure we don't get a catastrophic no-deal Brexit, which would mean the end of far more jobs than mine.”

Tory MEP Daniel Hannan said he has a number of things he is hoping to do after he steps down as an MEP.

He says he would very much like to work at a university, teaching modules in economics.

He will also continue his work with the Initiative for Free Trade (IFT), of which he is President.

“I'm certain and determined that my efforts on those and other issues won't stop when I cease to be an MEP” **Rory Palmer MEP**

In working for the IFT, he will travel around the world promoting the benefits of free trade. He sees trading opportunities to be far superior within trade areas outside the EU.

In the long term, he said he would like to open an institution of his own that will specialise in economic studies. On his feelings towards his time as an MEP, he says he is ready to move on.

During his tenure, he says he has been “shocked” by the workings of the European Parliament and the common practices of the EU institutions - for example, the vast level of expenses made available to MEPs on top of their wages.

He dislikes the “undemocratic nature” of the European political bodies, places where, he says, unelected officials make decisions which are then distributed to 28 member states, without regard for the varying needs of each nation.

Meanwhile, Labour member Rory Palmer said, “Whatever I do next I think it will draw on the huge

amount I've learnt since joining the European Parliament.”

“Of course, I would've liked to have had longer here and I will miss working with colleagues from other Member States and with the varied organisations we interact with every day as MEPs, particularly in the health field.”

“There are many issues I care about which I'm working on now, including the Dying to Work campaign, tackling food poverty, public health, fighting inequality and prejudice and encouraging young people to develop their ideas about politics and society.”

“I'm certain and determined that my efforts on those and other issues won't stop when I cease to be an MEP.”

### **About the author**

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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