

UK gears up for general election as Brexit hangs in the balance

Written by Lorna Hutchinson on 30 October 2019 in News
News

A divided UK will go to the polls for the third time in four years on December 12 as anti-Brexit campaigners hope it will usher in a Brexit-free future.



Photo credit: Press Association

On Tuesday evening UK MPs threw their weight behind Prime Minister Boris Johnson's bid to hold a general election before the end of the year, with the Early Parliamentary General Election Bill winning a landslide victory of 438 votes to 20.

There is arguably all to play for in the current combustible political climate, and campaigners on all sides are hoping that the gamble of a December general election will deliver an early Christmas present and not backfire horribly.

Reaction in Brussels was generally positive at the news of the snap election, with MEPs across the political spectrum hailing the poll as the most important in generations.

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Greens MEP Molly Scott Cato called the poll "a huge opportunity for us to reverse three years of Brexit hell," adding, "but to do that we need MPs elected to stop Brexit."

Fellow Greens MEP Alexandra Phillips said, "This is the most important General Election since [Margaret] Thatcher came to power."

"We need a socialist government - held to account by Greens. My advice is to vote Green in all seats that are not marginal (with more than a 3,000 majority) and vote for the strongest non-Tory (Labour/Liberal Democrat) option in marginals."

She warned, however, that the poll would not be a cure-all to the constitutional crisis that the UK has been immersed in since 52 percent of UK voters chose to leave the EU in June 2016.

"This is the most important General Election since [Margaret] Thatcher came to power"
Alexandra Phillips MEP

"I love a good General Election but it's not, in my view, going to resolve the Brexit impasse. And as someone who's been out campaigning over the winter months, numerous times, it is hard because of the dark, the cold, and people's occupation with winter festivities."

Brexit aside, Phillips noted that the climate crisis was also an important element in the General Election.

Citing a recent poll by ClientEarth, which showed that a majority of people in the UK say the climate crisis will influence how they vote in the General Election, she said, "54 percent polled said climate change would affect how they voted, with the proportion rising to 74 percent for under -25s, and 63 percent supported a Green New Deal - a large investment in jobs."

Senior Socialist deputy Richard Corbett said that if it wins, Labour "will put any Brexit outcome back to the people in a referendum, with the option to Remain on the ballot paper."

Fellow Labour MEP Seb Dance highlighted the results of a new study by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), showing that Boris Johnson's Brexit deal will leave the UK £70bn worse off than if it had remained in the EU.

“Something to think about as you cast your vote,” he added.

Julie Ward, another S&D colleague, mentioned the NIESR report, saying, “Boris Johnson’s Brexit deal will hit the economy by £70bn. The Tories are right, Britain Deserves Better.”

“We’re running a serious campaign, expect a very strong Brexit Party showing” **Rupert Lowe MEP**

Scottish National Party MEP Alyn Smith reminded people of the importance of registering to vote, saying, “This UK government is a shambles, we deserve better and we need to stop this nonsense and move on.”

Labour deputy Claude Moraes said there was “all to play for and so much at stake in this once-in-a-generation election,” adding, “good luck to all our UK Labour candidates and hard-working members - our biggest resource.”

As for the UK Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament, the group issued a statement on Twitter saying, “The Tory Brexit deal will leave the UK £70bn worse off. Let’s stop Brexit and invest in social housing, fight the climate crisis and rebuild our public services.”

“To do that, the LibDems need to win this election, and Jo Swinson needs to be Prime Minister.”

Liberal Democrats deputy Catherine Bearder said that every single vote cast for Labour and the Conservatives “will be counted and used by them as a vote to leave the EU.”

Fellow Liberal Democrats MEP Luisa Porritt echoed these sentiments, saying, “If you want to stop Brexit, there is only one choice at the December General Election: Jo Swinson and the Liberal Democrats.”

“All to play for and so much at stake in this once-in-a-generation election” **Claude Moraes MEP**

“Not the guy who wasted public money on pointless coins, clocks and ads. Nor the guy who can’t make his mind up from one day to the next whether he wants an election,” she said, adding that this General Election “will determine the future of our country beyond the next five years.”

Though pro-Brexit campaigners tend to be thin on the ground in Brussels, Brexit Party leader and MEP Nigel Farage reacted to the news of the snap election saying, “At last the deadlock in Parliament is broken, Brexit now has a chance to succeed.”

Party colleague and fellow deputy Rupert Lowe appeared buoyed by the news, saying, “Make no mistake, we are in it to win it. We’re running a serious campaign, expect a very strong Brexit Party showing!”

He went on, “For too long Brexiteers have been used as pawns between Labour and the Tories. Boris is just the next in the line of Tories who arrogantly claim Brexit as their cause and fail to deliver. About time the real Brexiteers took charge.”

About the author

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