



Remain Campaigns unite to call for final vote

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The main groups opposed to a hard Brexit are joining forces under the leadership of Chuka Umunna to push for the public's voice to be heard on the final deal to leave the EU.

The groups, representing more than 500,000 members, are putting aside their differences to work together as the grassroots coordinating group (GCG) at a time when polling suggests the public's appetite for a second referendum is growing.

The Tory MP Anna Soubry will co-chair the GCG, whose members include Caroline Lucas, co-leader of

the Green party and MP for Brighton Pavilion, and the Liberal Democrat MP Jo Swinson.

Umunna, a former shadow business secretary, said there had been a growing recognition that all the various pro-European groups needed to coordinate as it became more realistic to push for the public to get a say on the outcome of the Brexit process.

"Our challenge in the pro-European movement was bringing those people who don't want to see Brexit happen at all together with those who accept it may happen but want a soft Brexit.

"What unites everybody is they want the people to have a say on the



▲ Chuka Umunna will lead the new grassroots coordinating group (GCG)

form of Brexit. You could argue there was a mandate from the 2016 referendum for us to leave the EU - a majority of people who participated voted that way. But what we don't know, and the thing for which we have no mandate, was how we leave the EU and the form of Brexit we end up with.

"All of the groups are united in their determination that the people have got to have a place at the table in this process and it should not be dictated by a ministerial elite in Westminster."

The GCG will include the all-party parliamentary group on EU relations, Open Britain, the European Movement, InFacts, Scientists for EU, Healthier IN the EU, Best for Britain, the New European and many others.

Theresa May has promised that parliament will get a vote on any final deal she produces in the autumn, but Umunna said there could then be different mechanisms for letting the public's voice be heard.

"For some people it is ensuring their parliamentarianism isn't sidelined in this process," he said. "For other people, they would want the people getting a final say through a general election."

It was once again left to Walker and Baker to do most of the heavy lifting, though Fernandes chipped in from time to time with her own special words of wisdom.

The message was clear: The prime minister had been entirely coherent in her vision for Britain. Coherently incoherent. Britain was looking for a deep and special relationship, a bespoke deal that existed only in her imagination.

Everything was going better than anyone with no expectations could possibly have expected. And, yes, there were rumours that the civil service was full of remainer commies. Tomorrow belongs to us.

While all this was going on, Davis appeared distracted. Half asleep, even. As if he was hoping that, by closing his eyes, no one would realise he was there. He, too, started in soundbites before the shadow

Brexit secretary, Keir Starmer, questioned him on what exactly he knew of the leaked analyses.

Davis began to ad-lib. When he had casually mentioned to the Brexit select committee in December that his department was modelling a few rough scenarios, what he had really been referring to were these cabinet discussion papers. So he had known, sort of. Which wasn't exactly the impression Baker had given. Starmer then asked when he had been briefed on the outcomes of the analyses. Davis answered another question entirely, suggesting that people had been trying to pretend that ministers had been critical of civil servants. Even though no pretence had been required.

The Brexit select committee chair, Hilary Benn, pointed out that the absence of any modelling of the government's preferred outcome was not just one of those things civil servants had not yet got round to, but rather proof that the government had no idea of what its preferred outcome was. Other than La La Land.

At this point things rather fell apart. Despite half-hearted assurances that the prime minister had their full backing, every minister who came to the dispatch box seemed to have a slightly different take on what May wanted. Or even meant. Her overnight remarks about the status of EU nationals seemed to have been as much of a surprise to ministers as to everyone else. The lasting impression was of a government department making it up as it went along. Brexit. The race to the bottom. With every man - and solitary woman - for themselves.

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