

Labour is still failing to deliver a credible Brexit al...

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:22 am

I caused upset to some on Twitter last night when I said

So far it looks like today is the day Labour committed us to hard Brexit

When people demanded to know my reasoning I explained, saying:

Some don't see why I am saying Labour failed today. So let me explain. Turning up was not good enough to win. They had to give the Tory rebels a reason to vote with them. They failed to do so. That is a Labour failure in my opinion.

It seems that those who think me wrong to have made my comment thought that Labour turning up and voting pretty much en bloc against the government was enough for it to fulfil its duty. I disagree.

That's the most basic duty of an opposition. But by definition it can never win from that position: it is in opposition precisely because it has fewer votes than the government can usually muster. So if an opposition is to win - and there was some expectation that it might yesterday - and rebellions have happened before now on this issue - then it has to give reason for the rebellion to take place.

In my opinion Labour has failed to do that: its internal divisions and inconsistencies did not let the Tory rebels rebel with a clear conscience by saying they were voting for a better plan.

I can't see that better plan from Labour as yet. Frankly, it is still putting forward suggestion just as likely to be unacceptable to the EU member states as the ones the Tories are delivering. In that case it could not hope to win.

And for those who say being in opposition is all about almost imposing a successful three-line whip I'd suggest a little more thinking. I'd suggest it's actually about looking like a credible alternative, and so far on Brexit Labour is failing to be that credible alternative.