

13 June 2022

Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London

Prime Minister

Our parties collectively represent a majority inside the Northern Ireland Assembly and received a majority of votes cast in the recent Assembly election. We reject in the strongest possible terms your Government’s reckless new Protocol legislation, which flies in the face of the expressed wishes of not just most businesses, but most people in Northern Ireland.

The Protocol is itself a product of the hard Brexit you personally championed and a withdrawal deal you personally signed. Whilst not ideal, the protocol currently represents the only available protections for Northern Ireland from the worst impacts of that hard Brexit. The Protocol also offers clear economic advantages to our region, and the opportunity for unique access to two major markets. The fact that you have removed this advantage from businesses in Great Britain, at a clear economic cost, does not justify doing the same to businesses in Northern Ireland.

While we share a desire to see the arrangements work as smoothly as possible, the way to achieve this is through engagement with the European Union. It is clear that solutions are available and deliverable – as have already been delivered in the area of medicines – but this must be on the basis of trust and the rule of law rather than law breaking and unilateral abrogation of treaty obligations. It is also deeply frustrating that you and your ministers continue to misrepresent our desire to see smooth implementation as an endorsement of your Government’s reckless actions on the Protocol – it is categorically not.

Finally, we strongly reject your continued claim to be protecting the Good Friday Agreement as your Government works to destabilise our region. To complain the Protocol lacks cross-community consent, while ignoring the fact that Brexit itself – let alone hard Brexit - lacks even basic majority consent here, is a grotesque act of political distortion. Your claims to be acting to protect our institutions is as much a fabrication as the Brexit campaign claims you made in 2016.

The way to build trust and consent in our arrangements is to engage seriously with the EU on making them work, and to be honest with all parties about the inevitable consequences of leaving the Single Market and Customs Union. Sadly, trust and honesty are not words readily associated with you or your Government.

We will resolutely oppose this reckless Bill and continue to promote post-Brexit solutions on the basis of trust and honesty.

Yours sincerely

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