



Department for International Trade

Baroness Fairhead

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Dear Lord Adonis,

I am writing to you to thank you for engaging with the Trade Bill during its Second Reading on 11 September and to respond to points you raised during the debate, which specifically considered the backstop and the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The UK has been clear that we are committed to turning all of the commitments on Northern Ireland and Ireland made under the Joint Report into legally binding text. However, the UK is confident that the proposals set out in the White Paper for the UK's future relationship with the EU will ensure that the backstop solution as part of the Withdrawal Agreement should not need to be brought into effect.

The UK Government has consistently placed upholding the Belfast Agreement at the heart of our approach. The Prime Minister has been very clear that elements of the EU's proposed backstop option are unacceptable. It would, if implemented, undermine the UK common market and threaten the constitutional integrity of the UK by creating a customs border down the Irish Sea.

The UK's counter-proposal on the customs elements of a temporary backstop is that a Temporary Customs Arrangement should exist between the UK and the EU. This will ensure, for example, that if a customs arrangement with the EU is not in place by the end of the Implementation Period there will be no customs border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and that the integrity of the UK's internal market is preserved.

We are clear this would only be used in very specific circumstances and is not our preferred option.

Negotiations in this area are ongoing and we are confident that we can reach an agreement.

I hope you find this helpful. I am copying this letter to Lord Stevenson of Balmacara and Lord Purvis of Tweed, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the libraries of both houses.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Janine Rose', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Baroness Fairhead

Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion

Department for International Trade