



Cabinet Office

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Minister for the Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

Web www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Our Ref: CDL/2450

Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Chair, Exiting the EU Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

9 January 2019

Dear Hilary,

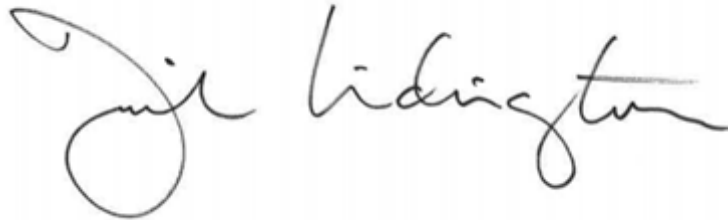
I am writing to inform you that the Government is today publishing a paper, *UK Government commitments to Northern Ireland and its integral place in the United Kingdom*, which outlines a package of measures to give Northern Ireland a strong voice and role in the backstop process. This includes a new Stormont lock to give Northern Ireland the power to reject new EU laws and regulation in the backstop.

The paper also sets out a number of other commitments to Northern Ireland and its integral place in the United Kingdom. These include:

- Setting out that no new areas of EU law would be applied in a backstop scenario without seeking the agreement of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- Ensuring unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to the Great Britain economy;
- Providing a strong role for Stormont before the backstop could be triggered;
- Giving the Northern Ireland Executive a role in Northern Ireland-specific discussions between the UK and EU under the structures established in the Withdrawal Agreement;
- Outlining that there would be no regulatory divergence between GB and NI in areas covered by the backstop in any scenario in which it applied;
- A guarantee that there would be no change to North-South cooperation through the Protocol, preserving the arrangements under Strand II of the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement;
- A powerful voice for Northern Ireland in future relationship negotiations - putting the voice of the Northern Ireland Executive, along with the other Devolved Administrations, at the heart of that work.

Additionally, I am attaching a copy of the conclusions adopted by the European Council (Article 50) following its meeting on 13 December 2018.

I am placing both these documents, along with a copy of this letter, in the Libraries of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP