

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

13 December 2022

Lord Empey
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Reg,

We are writing in response to a point you raised in debate on the final day of committee stage on the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. You asked about the involvement of elected representatives of Northern Ireland in negotiations with the EU. For the benefit of the House, we shall place a copy of my response in the Lords Library.

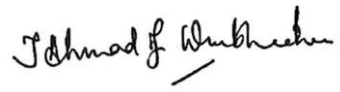
The prolonged absence of an Executive has, as you will understand, made the UK Government's engagement with Northern Ireland's elected representatives more complex. You will also understand that such engagement has to be made and offered on an equal basis between parties and communities in Northern Ireland. However, my colleague the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his ministerial team are in very regular contact with all the parties.

As you pointed out foreign affairs and international trade are, respectively, excepted and reserved matters. Nevertheless as set out under the *New Decade, New Approach* arrangements, the Government had ensured that representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive, when it was established, were invited to be part of the UK delegation in any meetings of the UK-EU Specialised or Joint Committees discussing Northern Ireland specific matters which were also being attended by the Irish Government as part of the European Union's delegation.

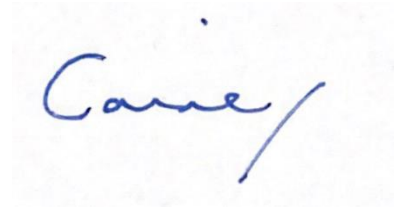
Our discussions with the EU are sensitive and are necessarily solely between the parties, as previous negotiations have been. As was the case during previous negotiations the Government will offer to engage closely with elected representatives from Northern Ireland from all parties to ensure that the UK Government is fully seized of their positions and that they are kept as informed as possible of ongoing discussions.

Yours sincerely,

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent underline at the end.

LORD CAINE

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent underline at the end.