

Business group established to look at Brexit backstop alternatives

Following the [launch](#) last week of an expert advisory group looking at alternative arrangements to the Northern Ireland backstop, the Government has convened a second group made up of businesses and trade unions to ensure their experience and on-the-ground knowledge informs developments.

The group includes cross-sector representatives from Ireland, Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, and will ensure the views of businesses and their employees are represented in this process.

The new Business and Trade Union Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group will complement the work of the recently-established Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group, which comprises trade and customs experts tasked with considering workable solutions to the backstop.

They will consider processes associated with the movement of goods across borders and options for simplifying them, such as trusted trader programmes and advanced use of data and IT systems.

The UK and EU have a shared desire to replace the backstop with alternative arrangements to ensure there is no hard border – and both sides have committed to prioritising the development of these in the next phase of talks.

The business and trade union group is one of three domestic advisory groups that the Government [announced earlier this year](#) to help inform its negotiations with the EU on this important issue.

The first meeting of the business and trade union group will take place today (Wednesday 26th June). It will be co-chaired by Brexit minister Robin Walker and BEIS minister Andrew Stephenson.

Robin Walker, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union, said:

The development of alternative arrangements to replace the backstop has been recognised as a priority by both the UK Government and the EU Commission. Accordingly, we have a highly-informed group of experts in trade and customs focused on developing and testing workable solutions.

But it is vital that any possible alternatives to the backstop are informed by the views of those on the ground, whose goods cross the border every single day. So I am delighted to chair this important group, which will ensure that the voices of business and trade

union representatives are heard.

Members of the business and trade union group have been chosen based on their comprehensive backgrounds in cross-border supply chains. The group includes large companies who can represent the views of themselves and their suppliers, as well as smaller companies who rely on cross-border “just in time” supply chains.

The Government has made available £20 million of funding to support the development, testing or piloting of any ideas that emerge from the advisory groups.

Business and Trade Union Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group members:

- Aodhán Connolly, British Retail Consortium NI, Director
- John McGrane, British Irish Chamber of Commerce, Director General
- Dr Mike Johnston, Dairy Council for Northern Ireland, Chief Executive
- Seamus Leheny, Freight Transport Association NI, Policy Manager
- Angela McGowan, CBI NI, Director
- Karen Marshall, BoW Leather, Managing Director
- Aidan Gough, InterTradeIreland, Designated Officer and Director of Strategy and Policy
- Conall Donnelly, Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association, Executive Director
- David Nicholl, NC Engineering, Director
- Wilson Del Socorro, Diageo, Global Director of Public Affairs
- Wesley Aston, Ulster Farmers’ Union, Chief Executive
- Ian Hampton, Stena Line, Chief People, Communications and Sustainability Officer
- Marcus Wachtmeister, BMW Group UK, Head of Government Affairs
- Tom McGroder, Sensata Technologies (Schrader Electronics), Global Trade Compliance EU Regional Manager
- Clare Guinness, Warrenpoint Harbour, Chief Executive
- Owen Reidy, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Assistant General Secretary
- Dr Gerard O’Hare CBE, DL, Belfast Harbour, Board Member
- Craig Jones, General Electric, Director of Government Relations