

Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee on 10 September

The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met today at Lancaster House, London. The meeting was chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, and the European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, alongside the co-chairs of the Committee, the Paymaster General, Penny Mordaunt, and Michel Barnier. Representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive and the EU 27 Member States also joined by videolink.

This meeting was an opportunity for both parties to set out their positions. Vice President Šefčovič detailed the European Union's concerns, and requested that the UK withdraw the UK Internal Market Bill. The UK Government made clear that the legislative timetable for the Bill would continue as planned.

The UK Government reiterated its commitment to implementing the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster updated the Committee on the significant steps already taken to implement the protocol, with investment to support Northern Ireland businesses and new IT systems. The UK Government also stressed its obligations to the citizens of Northern Ireland, its determination to uphold the constitutional status of Northern Ireland within the UK, and its responsibility to provide good governance for the whole United Kingdom. As co-guarantor, along with Ireland, of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the Government's commitment to that agreement remains absolute.

The Protocol makes clear that Northern Ireland is fully part of the customs territory of the United Kingdom and that there will be unfettered access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom. It is essential that, in the implementation of the Protocol, nothing undermines those fundamental principles.

Accordingly, the measures set out in the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill are designed to create a 'safety net' that ensures ministers can always deliver on their obligations and take steps to best ensure the prosperity and protect the enormous progress the people of Northern Ireland have made in recent decades.

The UK Government underlined its determination to continue to engage in Joint Committee discussions constructively, with the aim of finding a satisfactory outcome for both sides.