

My Intervention on the Windsor Framework Motion 2- Stormont Brake

Does the shadow Secretary of State recognise that there is a different school of thought from some people and businesses in Northern Ireland around the Stormont brake? If there is a degree of delay or uncertainty in the application of an updated EU regulation, that could inadvertently undermine Northern Ireland's dual market access, by creating uncertainty for businesses seeking to invest or remain in Northern Ireland. By far the better way is for Northern Ireland institutions to talk to the European Union at the start, to make sure that our concerns are reflected as fresh EU law is undertaken or updated.

The hon. Member makes an extremely powerful and useful point. The businesses that I have spoken to in Northern Ireland support Northern Ireland's access to the EU market. In choosing to pull or not pull the Stormont brake there are many considerations, which I am sure elected politicians in Northern Ireland will take into consideration. Let us be honest: it depends on what we are talking about. What impact will it have? Will it have a really bad effect, in which case people might reach for the brake? Other times it may be a perfectly sensible change and nobody needs to worry about it. But there is a mechanism that gives Northern Ireland politicians and the Assembly the chance to decide between the two.

John Redwood:

Further to that point, which is a very good one, would the EU not decide to use its powers if Stormont tried to use the brake too often and change the amount of EU law that applied?

Hilary Benn:

The Stormont brake was the result of a negotiation between the Government and the European Union. It was a really big step forward—it is why we are having this discussion now, and I support it. Anything is possible in the future with regard to what one or another party that is engaged in continuing discussions and negotiations may seek to do, but we have a deal with the European Union and it expects us to honour the Windsor framework—a point I have made in the House many times before—and we would expect the EU to do entirely the same. Nobody can guard with absolute certainty against what may happen in the future; we have to deal with the world as it is today.