

My Interventions in the Draft Postal Packets (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2023 (4)

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there has already been diversion of trade away from GB into Northern Ireland, and is he worried that the draft regulations will create a lot more diversion of trade away from GB?

The right hon. Gentleman is quite right: that is the problem. In the absence of detailed knowledge about what the new arrangements will be, businesses will simply turn their back on Northern Ireland. I spoke to a constituent today who wanted to buy a mattress from Argos. Although Argos clearly brings goods into Northern Ireland, that was obviously inconvenient for it and it simply said, "We don't sell mattresses to Northern Ireland any longer." That is exactly what is happening. Even if the Minister is correct, the threat that there will be different arrangements for taking goods and postal packages into Northern Ireland will discourage businesses from entering into those kinds of arrangements. We are already seeing the diversion of trade.

The Government's argument is that the draft regulations improve the situation, but actually, they do not. If we had stopped even with the provisions of the protocol, the grace periods would have prevented this from happening. It does not happen at present. If the Government really want there to be no interference, why not stick with the grace periods? Why not make it clear that the regulations are not needed? There has been no leakage during the grace periods, and there is no evidence that hazardous goods and so on are moving into the EU. Why did the Government not take that stance? Why are the Government still not taking that stance? There would then be no need for the regulations.