

News story: Pledge to protect Belfast Agreement and Common Travel Area in new position paper

The Government has today published a comprehensive paper which outlines the UK's position on addressing the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and the land border with Ireland.

The position paper – which has been published ahead of the August negotiating round – states that the Government will protect the Common Travel Area (CTA) and associated rights for UK and Irish citizens, and put upholding the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement at the heart of its Exit negotiations.

The paper also puts forward proposals on avoiding a hard border on the movement of goods – making clear the UK's position that there should be no physical infrastructure at the border – and plans to preserve the wide range of institutional cooperation between Northern Ireland, Ireland and Great Britain including for the energy market.

Secretary of State for Exiting the EU David Davis said:

The UK and Ireland have been clear all along that we need to prioritise protecting the Belfast Agreement in these negotiations, and ensure the land border is as seamless as possible for people and businesses.

The proposals we outline in this paper do exactly that, and we're looking forward to seeing the EU's position paper on the Northern Ireland border.

In committing to keep the Common Travel Area, which has existed for nearly a century, we're making sure UK and Irish citizens will continue to be able to travel, live, work and study across both countries.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire said:

This paper shows the Government's commitment to protecting and advancing the unique interests of Northern Ireland as we leave the EU. We are fully committed to the Belfast Agreement, and the principles, rights and institutions it established.

The paper provides flexible and imaginative ideas and demonstrates our desire to find a practical solution that recognises the unique economic, social and cultural context of the land border with Ireland, without creating any new obstacles to trade within the UK.

I believe it is possible to find a solution that works for the UK, for Ireland and for the EU – and, specifically, for Northern Ireland – and am determined to work to achieve that.

It is clear that there are many areas where the UK, Ireland and the rest of the EU have shared objectives. We have a lot to build on but need to work together intensively over the coming months.

The paper will say:

- Support for the Belfast Agreement should be written into the Withdrawal Agreement to reflect the absolute commitment of the UK Government, Irish Government, and the European Union, to the peace process.
- The Withdrawal Agreement should recognise that the people of Northern Ireland will continue to have – as set out in the Belfast Agreement – a birthright to both Irish and British citizenship. Any people in Northern Ireland who are Irish citizens will continue to benefit from the EU citizenship rights that flow from that.
- The Withdrawal Agreement should also recognise the ongoing status of the CTA and associated rights, a position that is entirely consistent with the EU's negotiating directives. This will mean there are no passport controls for UK and Irish citizens travelling within the CTA and no question of new immigration checks operating between Northern Ireland and Ireland.
- PEACE funding for reconciliation projects in border areas should be continued. We want to explore a potential future programme post-2020 with the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government.
- The UK and the EU should agree a common understanding of the principles of North-South and East-West cooperation in the initial phases of the dialogue, including key principles to test future models for border arrangements and energy. This includes no physical border infrastructure and maintaining the Single Electricity Market.

The policy document is the fourth formal position paper to be shared with the EU on matters related to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

It will inform the ongoing dialogue between the UK and EU negotiating teams on the the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and Ireland in light of the UK's withdrawal from, and new partnership with, the EU, as well as building on the proposals in the UK's customs paper published on Tuesday.

You can find the paper [here](#)