

Press release: David Mundell speaks on PM's Brexit Deal



In a speech to stakeholders in London today [6 December 2018] Mr Mundell pointed to the businesses the length and breadth of Scotland who have urged MPs to vote for the deal. He said:

I have engaged closely with the business world in Scotland, and the Prime Minister was in Scotland last week. We've heard concerns. We've faced some difficult questions. But a clear view has also emerged. There is a recognition that there are currently only two options on the table – and that one of them, a no deal Brexit, would be a disaster for the economy. There is a consistent view that the Withdrawal Agreement provides a workable basis on which to move forward. Over the past fortnight, calls to support the deal have grown steadily louder.

The Scottish Secretary set out that the deal – while a compromise – was the best alternative to a 'no deal' which would be bad for businesses and individuals across Scotland. He said:

I am more and more convinced the deal is right for Scotland and the whole of the UK. I'm not saying it is perfect. And let me be clear, I'm not pretending organisations and business leaders believe it is perfect. It is a compromise. No-one gets things all their own way in a negotiation and we have had 18 months of tough negotiations with the EU. But it is increasingly clear that both sides have had to give ground. Parts of the Withdrawal Agreement are as uncomfortable for other EU member states as they are for us – and that's why I do not believe it is realistic to suppose there is a better deal on offer.

The Scottish Secretary stressed the Prime Minister's robust assurances on protecting Scotland's fishing industry. He said:

It is essential that Brexit delivers for our fishermen. They want out of the CFP. They want the UK negotiating on quotas and access to waters as an independent coastal state. They do not want a future deal that links EU access to our fishing grounds to our access to EU markets. We can and will deliver all that. The Prime Minister has defended our fishing industry in negotiations so far – and has pledged 100 per cent to do so in future. Claims that Scotland’s fishermen have been ‘sold out’ are demonstrably false. It’s old fashioned scaremongering.

Mr Mundell reiterated his view that the proposed Irish backstop will protect the integrity of the UK. He said:

I accept the backstop remains a concern. It would result in a limited number of additional checks on livestock and goods entering Northern Ireland from the UK. This is an extension of the already existing unique circumstances in order to prevent a hard border. As a Unionist I’m wary of anything that might appear to weaken the UK’s vital internal market. But I’m a Unionist and a devolutionist. I’ve been a champion of doing things differently within our Union since I became an MSP nearly 20 years ago. And what I see proposed for Northern Ireland – in the event of the backstop kicking in – are effective, carefully tailored arrangements that take account of their special and unique circumstances. That means avoiding a hard border with Ireland. It means honouring the Belfast Agreement and fostering the still fragile peace process. What I do not see proposed – crucially – is a border down the Irish Sea. Nor do I see ‘special treatment’ that would give Northern Ireland a competitive advantage and should be extended to Scotland. In short, I see a pragmatic solution to a difficult problem.

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