

Press release: Northern Ireland organisations meet PM to discuss Brexit deal

Prime Minister Theresa May welcomed business and civil society leaders from Northern Ireland to Number 10 Downing Street today, telling them: “Your voices are incredibly important”.

The Prime Minister updated around 50 representatives from Northern Ireland businesses, universities and the voluntary and community sector on the draft Brexit deal at a reception, also attended by David Lidington, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the Business Secretary Greg Clark.

Organisations in attendance included the CBI NI, Manufacturing NI, Ulster Farmers Union and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The Prime Minister attended the event after updating the House of Commons on the draft Withdrawal Agreement and political declaration on the UK-EU future relationship, following her meeting with President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker last night.

At this afternoon’s reception, the Prime Minister said:

Taken together – the draft Withdrawal Agreement and the broad terms of our new relationship – should provide your businesses with the reassurance that I know is so important to you.

That’s a transition period to avoid a cliff-edge for businesses and to provide the certainty you need to invest.

An outline relationship that creates a new free trade area with the EU, with no tariffs, fees, charges or quantitative restrictions.

And no hard border within the island of Ireland.

She added:

As we move forward with our future relationship, I hope that you will continue to engage with us and share your perspective.

I know many of you have been out there stating your support for the draft deal. I want to thank you for that. Your voices are incredibly important.

Stephen Kelly, Chief Executive of Manufacturing NI, said:

We are very pleased to directly engage with the Prime Minister on the Withdrawal Agreement and what that means for the Northern Ireland economy, jobs and consumers.

It is the united view of Northern Ireland's business and farming groups that the Agreement will ensure continued frictionless trade for our firms both with the rest of the UK and with the EU.

We are ready and willing to get behind the deal which is good for our businesses.

This reception follows a speech in Belfast on Monday by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley, in which she told business leaders that the draft Withdrawal Agreement delivers for the people and businesses of Northern Ireland.