

Resolving the Northern Ireland trade issues

Next week the EU is likely once again to try to force its wrong interpretation of the NI Protocol onto the U.K. negotiating team. Once more the EU will wish to ignore the mutual enforcement proposal from the U.K. which could free GB/ NI trade from EU restrictions whilst offering U.K. enforcement to prevent the on sale and delivery of goods into the EU from NI that are not compliant with EU rules.

The EU has violated the Protocol in three main ways. It has used it to divert trade from GB/NI to NI/EU. It has damaged the Good Friday Agreement with the First Minister vacating his office over the EU attitude to the Protocol. It has failed to maintain the support of the Unionist community for the EU approach because the EU does not respect NI's place in the U.K.

The U.K. government should move now to offer NI some of the Brexit benefits. NI should be offered a large Freeport to promote investment and trade with a range of tax concessions and facilitation for growing businesses. Why not offer to match the Republic of Ireland's low Corporation tax rate? The government should remove VAT from all green products and from domestic fuel, and legislate for this to apply in NI as well as the rest of the U.K.