

# Sort out the GB/Northern Ireland trade

It is wrong that many GB businesses now find they cannot send their goods to willing buyers in Northern Ireland without a large amount of extra paperwork or even EU inspired bans. Both sides to the UK/EU Agreement opposed a hard border on the island of Ireland. Both wished to protect the EU single market and the UK internal market, and allow NI easy access to both. That is what the Protocol says.

The EU has decided to use the Protocol to create a hard border in Northern Ireland against Great Britain. This border is not in the Irish Sea but is enforced against containers, vans and trucks on arrival in Northern Ireland. The EU seems to think a North-south border has to be open but an east-west border needs to be tightly controlled by them. They should try reading the Good Friday Agreement which is about looking after the interests of both the Protestant and the Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. This heavy handed approach by the EU violates the Good Friday Agreement as far as the loyalist community in Northern Ireland is concerned.

Lord Frost's recent article is right in tone and content. He now needs to be careful in negotiations not to allow the EU to insert its controls in the way of GB/Northern Ireland trade. That trade should be regulated and policed by the UK and NI authorities. Of course they should make sure people are not using easy access to NI to then send things onto the Republic which are not EU compliant. There is no evidence this is happening. The UK authorities have every interest in not allowing that. There is no need to submit trucks taking supermarket produce from GB to named stores in Northern Ireland to special checks in case they were planning to go on to the Republic, because they are not. In an age of computer manifests, truck tracking, pre filed journey and stock schedules trade should be allowed to flow. Any checks or audits that are needed in NI should be for the UK to carry out, and any needed in the Republic for the EU. There have been smuggling problems on the UK/Republic border during our time in the EU which were always sorted out by co-operation from each side whilst respecting the different jurisdictions. .

Either the EU agrees sensible mutual enforcement with each jurisdiction taking responsibility on its own territory or the UK must simply impose that on the UK side. It is the best and most practical way of implementing the stated aims of the Protocol.